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**CARTAGENA
AND THE BANKS OF THE SINÚ**

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R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM ON "LUCERO," CARTAGENA DE INDIAS.

CARTAGENA AND THE BANKS OF THE SINÚ

Robert Bontine BY
R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM, 1852-
AUTHOR OF "A BRAZILIAN MYSTIC," ETC.

NEW YORK: GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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A LA ILUSTRE SEÑORITA

CAMILA WALTERS,

DE CARTAGENA DE INDIAS, CON EL HOMENAGE
DE MI ADMIRACION Y AMISTAD SINCERAS.

CARTAGENA DE INDIAS

MORNE ville jadis reine des Océans ;
Aujourd’hui le requin poursuit en paix les sombres
Et le nuage errant allonge seul les ombres.
Sur ta rade ou roulaient les galions géants.

Depuis Drake et l’assaut des Anglais mecréants
Tes murs desemparés croulent en noirs décombres
Et, comme un glorieux collier de perles sombres
Les boulets de Pointis montrent les trous béants.

Entre le ciel qui brûle et la mer qui moutonne
Au somnolent soleil d’un midi monotone
Tu songes ô Guerrière aux vieux conquistadors.

Et dans l’énervement des nuits chaudes et calmes
Berçant ta gloire éteinte, ô cité tu t’endors
Sous les palmiers, un long frémissement des palmes.

JOSÉ MARIA DE HEREDIA

PREFACE

NOTHING could possibly have been a better corrective to the atmosphere of war, the excited newspapers, the people ever on the lookout for news, the accounts of hardships, heroism, and death at the front, and the oceans of false sentiment at home, than a visit to Cartagena and the Sinú. Little enough the people there were stirred by war news, though they regarded it with a mild curiosity, tempered by lack of faith in most of what they heard. True it was that several German steamers lay in the bay, blistered by the sun and dirty, their plates expanding and their paint dropping off in scales. The people looked at them at first and then took them apparently just as they take their city and their lives, as sent by God, and therefore not to be questioned by mankind. They heard the news of the suicide of a German mate, unable to endure the monotony on board, and remarked, "Pobrecito." That was his epitaph. Certainly it was fitting for his death—or, rather, his escape from life. After a week or two within the walls of the "unconquered city" one felt that there possibly might be a war, up somewhere in the clouds, but that it did not matter much. In fact, one soon assumed the attitude of a man who passes by an ant-hill and sees the toiling multitudes beneath his feet, and then walks on, smoking a cigarette, and thinking that it is a fine day.

In the bay lay a little warship built at Pola, that once had constituted the navy of Morocco under the name of the *Bashir*. Now she was still the backbone of a naval force, that of Colombia. I knew her at a glance, with her straight bow and air of crankiness, and remembered having gone aboard her at Tangier. The sentry who was squatted at the gangway invited me to go down to the “café,” and this I found to be the captain’s cabin. It was fitted up with little tables, and at a charcoal stove a “khawarji” was making coffee. Innumerable cages filled with canary-birds were hung about, their occupants singing their loudest all the time. I thought I had seldom seen a warship so perfectly transformed, but I had still something to learn upon the point. What the *Bashir* was called in Cartagena I forget ; but when I went on board her a vampire bat was hanging in a deserted alleyway ; her decks were scorching, and an old negro, fishing from the stern, was all her complement. Somebody bought her (I think a Yankee speculator of some sort), and she was towed away eventually, towards some port unknown. She may have reached it. I hardly think so, but I hope it was a port in Central America, and that she still floats and is considered the chief defence at sea of some republic—for choice a state that has no seaboard—and that she is commanded from afar by telephone.

The old, white town, looking like a gigantic wedding-cake, preserved miraculously against the assaults of time to celebrate its double marriage, that of Europe with Salvagia in the Middle Ages, and its approaching union with the modern world, appeared

to slumber quite incurious of wars, of tottering empires, of air-raids, poison gas, and all the benefits that civilization has entailed on a glad world. The whispering palm-trees sang the dirge of its departed glories, made musical like Eolian harps by the soft breezes from the Caribbean Sea. Still, its sleep was now and then disturbed by events that linked it to the bloodthirsty world of Europe, the land where all men's hands were raised against their fellows in the name of Christianity and peace. Well have we played the part of helot to the republics of the Southern Hemisphere, and taught them that all our criticism of their poor, futile revolutions, so sparing of the sacrifice of life, so careful to respect the honour of the home, have been but child's play, compared to our own bloody sport.

Even to Cartagena there came echoes of the war. An old, condemned stern-wheeler, lofty of side, beam-engined, crank as a coracle, and quite unseaworthy, had lain for three years in the mud at Maracaibo. Her seams all gaped, her paint was cracked and blistered by the sun, her engines rusty, and round her garboard strakes festoons of seaweed had gathered into a veritable forest, clinging to the barnacles. What her name had been when she toiled up against the muddy waters of the Mississippi I cannot tell. The company that bought her named her the *Santa Barbara*. They set her to run from Cartagena to Quibdó, the capital of the Chocó, up the Atrato River, and down the coast, touching at Tolú, Cispata, and other little ports, after a summary repair. Paint hid the opening seams. The rusty engines had been

greased and oiled, and the great beam worked jerkily. Her top hamper was great, her freeboard low. Boats she possessed but one, hung near the stern, and used to keep potatoes, yams, or vegetables, or as a sleeping-place for deck hands or a chance negro passenger. Her engine-room was almost open, after the fashion of old-time, Yankee river-boats. Nothing could well have been imagined more unfit to cope with the rough waters of the Caribbean Sea, or round the Point of Tigua, fifteen leagues upon her way towards the Chocó, for there a heavy sea gets up at the least breeze. Passengers always crowded her, sleeping in every corner, curled up upon the deck, or in the hammocks that Colombians nearly always carry with them, hung to the stanchions of the awning-rail. Some few—mostly rich Syrian storekeepers—going to Quibdó, or mining engineers for the great platinum mines in the Chocó, secured the boxlike dens called cabins by antonomasy. She usually was laden to within a foot of her low freeboard, and all the decks were crowded with boxes, trunks, bundles, saddles, bales, and packages of goods.

Her crew were negroes and nondescripts, and her engineer, of course, a Scotsman, known as Scottie, stricken in drink and years; but capable and brave to rashness, as he had proved a hundred times by venturing his life in such a *Babylonia* as was the rechristened *Santa Barbara*. That nothing should be wanting, and that the link should be supplied between this antique vessel worthy to have convoyed *La Pinta* and *La Santa María* in their memorable voyage from Palos, had they not outsailed her, a young

German mate, from one of the Boche steamers, interned in the bay, acted as captain. He proved himself a sailor and a man. The *Santa Barbara*, after the usual delay of several hours, cleared out of Cartagena in a calm afternoon. She passed into the Caño,¹ at whose mouth the village of Pasacaballos is situated; then out into the great lagoon beyond it. There, she met the gale that seems to have been blowing since the days of the Conquistadores, and is most likely blowing as I write. She rolled like a galleon, the heavy upper decks catching the wind like sails. Seas came aboard of her and set the packages and bales upon her decks awash. The miserable passengers were soaked, and as the evening advanced the seas grew heavier, and still the Point of Tigua loomed a league or two in front of her as she lay labouring in the sea.

The German captain dived into the engine-room and then emerged without his cap, his hair tossed in the wind, and scanned the horizon anxiously. After a look about the deck, and a compassionate glance at the soaked passengers rendering their tribute to Neptune, he took his resolution. Advancing to an Englishman who was sheltering behind a deckhouse, he drew his feet together, clicked his heels, and said, "My name is Einstein, Second-Lieutenant of the Reserve of German Navy," and raised his fingers mechanically, forgetting he had lost his cap. "We are at war," he said; "but what of that?—no one cares to die without a fight. You see that headland? It is the Point of Tigua. The sea is breaking heavily upon it, and if

¹ Passage between mangrove swamps.

we drift there we are lost. Only a month ago a steamer failed to weather it, and not a soul was saved. Those that were not dashed on the rocks, the sharks soon tore to pieces. Upon the other side of it we shall be in shelter ; but the swine firemen are frightened and refuse to work. Come down with me, and . . . ah, that is right, you have a pistol : we will help Scottie to persuade them to work on."

The Englishman, muttering "All right," went down below into the engine-room. The firemen, huddled in a heap, had turned that ashy-grey colour that comes into a negro's face at the approach of death, or strongly moved by fear. A foot or two from the ship's furnaces the water lapped up dangerously. Holding their pistols in their hands, the enemies, made comrades by the deadly peril they were in, distributed a hearty kick or two and forced the negroes to fire up.

When they had passed the Point of Tigua, and the old *Santa Barbara* had got under shelter, shaking the water off her decks, as a Newfoundland dog shakes himself on emerging from a swim, they left the engine-room and came up on deck. The two men looked at one another and said nothing, and then instinctively their hands stole out towards each other. The Englishman, half shyly, muttered, " You are a damned good Boche. My name is Brown."

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

CARTAGENA

AND THE BANKS OF THE SINÚ

CHAPTER I

THE great Colombian province, known as El Departamento de Bolívar, though it has an extent of 41,000 square miles, is but little known to the outside world. It is bounded on the north by the Caribbean Sea and the department of Atlántico, on the south by the department of Antioquia, on the east by the departments of Santander and Magdalena, and on the west by the Caribbean Sea. The chief towns are Cartagena (the capital), Arjona, Calamar, Santiago de Tolú, El Carmen, Corozal, Chinú, Magangué, Monteria, Sincelejo, and Lorica.

The ports are Cartagena, Tolú, Cobeñas, Cispata, and Magangué, all on the Caribbean Sea, except the port of Magangué, situated on the Magdalena River, not far from its junction with the Rivers San Jorge and Cauca. So little visited is the district that few Colombians ever go there except called by business. Lying within the tropics, Cartagena, the capital, is in latitude 10 degrees north.¹

¹ Herrera, in his "Historia General de España," says it is just 1,460 leagues from Toledo. This may be so. As the Arab saying runs: "My donkey's off forefoot stands right over the centre of the world. If you do not believe me, go and measure for yourself."

The soil is rich and the climate healthy. Though it was the first of the provinces of the kingdom of New Granada, now the republic of Colombia, to be colonized by the Spaniards, various circumstances have contributed to make it neglected by the inhabitants of the republic and but rarely visited by foreigners up to the present day.

Rich in all tropical products, with extensive pastures for countless herds of cattle, full of mineral wealth—the platinum mines near Quibdó are renowned all the world over—the department of Bolívar is one of the richest of the republic of Colombia. However, at the conquest, the stream of colonization steadily set towards the cooler lands of the interior. The same thing happened in the republic of Ecuador, and to a less degree in Mexico.

In Colombia and in the other two republics there had been great Indian towns where now the capitals are situated. The cooler climate and the search for gold, never to be found close to the coast, had set the stream to the interior. Thus, in Colombia and Ecuador, the far interior was sooner civilized than was the coast. This brought about a sort of atrophy of civilization in the distant places, where it had been established first. Old customs were preserved, old forms of speech, and, in the main, old ways of thought.

The coastal provinces, neglected at the first conquest of the country, in many instances have now become far more progressive than the capitals. This does not apply to the department of Bolívar. Although less than three hundred miles from Panamá, with its most modern life, its great canal, its position, which must

make it one day the lock-gate through which will pass the greatest flood of the commerce of the world, the province slumbers in an old-world repose. Flat in the main, with but one considerable range of hills, that only rise some eight to nine hundred feet, the whole face of the country, with the exception of the celebrated plains known as Los Llanos de Corozal, was at one time covered with virgin forests. A great part is so still. Two rivers traverse the whole province, in almost its entire length. One, the Sinú, rises in the mountains of Antioquia and falls into the Caribbean Sea at the port of Cispata, its mouth forming a sheltered bay. The other, the Rio San Jorge, falls into the Magdalena, near its junction with the Rio Cauca, not far from the town of Magangué.

The open plains lie between the two rivers, and nearing the San Jorge are the extensive marshes of Ayapel, in which feed cattle when the plains are parched with drought.

The climate, hot but healthy, is that of most parts of the tropics, having but two seasons, the wet and dry. In Colombia they are referred to as summer and winter; but in reality the winter—that is, the season of the rains—is the hotter of the two. The thermometer ranges between one hundred and five and seventy-five degrees. Frost is unknown, and hurricanes seldom or never are experienced except upon the coast. The chief town is the capital, Cartagena, called Cartagena de Indias to distinguish it from the city of that name in Spain. The ancient capital was Santiago de Tolú, known for its balsam extracted from a plant that grew profusely there, at the first conquest of the

land. Situated about thirty miles from Cartagena upon a little bay, it is a well-built, old-fashioned Spanish colonial town. Its sandy streets, deserted in the middle of the day, when the whole population sleeps, bake in the sun, reflecting back its rays a hundredfold. The low and flat-roofed houses seem uninhabited, and nothing moves, except a vulture now and then, that stretches out its wings and flutters them, as if rejoicing in the heat.

In the evening, the houses, so to speak, give up their dead, and by degrees, men dressed in white, with jipi-japa hats, open their stores, and sit perspiring in their shirt-sleeves, at the receipt of custom, that is not urgent in its claims. The sun sinks lower and disappears, a ball of fire, into the lagoon, and in the little plaza, girls stroll about accompanied by mothers or by aunts, and gossip with the more or less embattled youths and men. Perhaps a man on horse-back crosses the plaza at the fast shuffling, artificial pace known in Colombia as "el paso," the rider sitting easily and upright in his saddle, after the fashion of all Spanish Americans, who ride almost as soon as they can walk.

"There goes Don Placido," or "Señor Valenzuela," as the case may be, someone remarks. Don Placido, seeing he is observed, recollects he has forgotten something at the corner store. Then, taking his horse well by the head, he spurs it surreptitiously on the off side, making it plunge, and then dropping his hat he pretends to be annoyed, and stooping from the saddle picks it up gracefully, regains his seat as easily as if he were a circus-rider, talks for a moment to the

storekeeper, and once again crosses the square, this time at the best pace his horse can muster up.

The sea breeze setting in brings with it a little fleet of tapering canoes, all hollowed out of a tree trunk, piled up with plantains, mangoes, bananas, pine-apples, and caimitos, with their dull metallic leaves, green on one side and brown upon the back. Their leaves, indeed, have given rise to a local saying about a double-dealing man, "You are like the leaf of the caimito—fair upon one side, on the other black."¹ The other towns each have their characteristics, determined chiefly by their situation and their trade.

Lorica, on the Sinú, the chief town of the cattle-breeding district, was called after an Indian chief of the same name. Built on the high and muddy bank of an alluvial river that flows dark yellow like the Tiber, it is a port for the canoes of all the district on the river's banks. The market-place, in which sit countless people of colour dressed in white, overhangs the river, and on a market-day hundreds of canoes, piled up with country produce, jostle each other on the bank. Men step from one to the other, performing miracles of equilibrium, passing from the outermost crank, little embarkation, over ten or a dozen others, till they reach the bank. The smallest loss of balance would overset the canoe and all its merchandise; but long experience enables them to walk as easily over the swaying bridge of slender dugouts, as they would walk upon dry land.

The great church forms the centre of the town.

¹ The caimito is known in the West Indies as the star apple. It is the *Chrysophyllum caimito* of botany.

Built in a sort of nondescript, but not unpicturesque, style, common in Colombia, the door stands always open, giving a glimpse of a great, cool, and empty floor, very inviting to worshippers who have sweltered all the morning in the sun. On each side of the door grows a tall palm-tree, whose leaves rustle an introit at the faintest breeze that stirs their fronds.

Outside the walls and all along them are planted other palms, so that the church rises from out a veritable grove. As all Colombia is a land of priests and pious laymen, or at the least of outward, visible conformity, the church's bells are seldom still for more than a full hour, from Angelus to Angelus. Although the congregation may not consist of more than a few devout negro women or half-Indian cattle peons, the service, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, still takes its course. On Sundays the whole edifice is thronged at the chief Mass. A congregation dressed in white, holding its panama straw hats in its brown hands, packs all the floor. The women kneel or sit down sideways on the floor, just as they do in Seville or in Cordoba. The men stand with their eyes fixed upon the ground, and at the altar the perspiring priest, choked in his rich embroidered cope, goes through his genuflections with as little energy as he can well expend. As a general rule he is a Spaniard or an Italian, sometimes a Syrian; but in all cases the coloured population pays him more reverence than a cardinal receives in Rome, hard by the Vatican.

Two or three crumbling Spanish houses give a character as of the Old World to the narrow plaza at

whose corner, opposite the church, stands the great modern house of the chief family, but built entirely in the ancient style, so fitting to the climate and the life. Its patios and open galleries, its well at which a negro seems to pass his life drawing up buckets with a chain, give a strange flavour of Castile.

Stores in which everything is sold, from bits and reins to China silks and prints from Manchester, are the chief features of the streets. In them sit all the representatives of the chief families, for trade in the republic of Colombia, as in the East, from which, filtered through Spain, most of its customs are derived, does not detract from personal consequence, and a man who can trace his origin from the first conquerors, whose flocks and herds graze over leagues of territory, sells you a pound of tea with as much grace as he would enter into business that involved a hundred thousand dollars, in cattle or in grain.

Many of the storekeepers come from Syria, and nothing is more common than to hear Arabic spoken and to catch a glimpse of a dark-featured Syrian woman in the back shop, who, though a Christian of the Christians, still by the virtue of her Oriental upbringing draws back when a strange man appears upon the scene.

Cattle peons, dressed in tight white trousers and short jackets, with hats of dark brown straw, low-crowned and broad-brimmed, stroll about the streets, taciturn and half Indian by blood, a striking contrast to the voluble and lively negro population of the coast. The broad and sandy streets, cut into blocks after the usual fashion of all towns in South America, lead out

from well-built rows of houses and stores packed to the roofs with hides, with sugar hogsheads, and with grain, till by degrees they trickle past low hovels thatched with banana leaves, finally disappearing into the network of trails that lead into the town. Thus, as in most towns in Colombia, it is difficult to say where the town ends and the true country starts.

Lorica and Tolú may serve as models for almost any of the towns in the department of Bolívar, situated on the alluvial plains. Sixty or seventy miles higher up the river is situated the purely Indian town of Tucurá. Its inhabitants, civilized or "reduced," as the phrase went, not long after the first conquest, are a peaceful race, short, strong, and olive-coloured. Few of them have retained more than a smattering of their native speech, but all speak Spanish. Still, they have maintained relations with the exceedingly quiet and inoffensive "wild Indians"¹ in the adjoining woods. The "wild" men sometimes stray into the places, leaving their bows and arrows with some storekeeper, and walk about the town speaking to no one, keeping together in a group, just like wild horses, a pitiful, pathetic, and dwarfish remnant of the men who once possessed the land. They still retain their terror of the horse, an animal so fatal to their ancestors, and fly for shelter if a mounted man passes them suddenly.

The River Sinú runs for about two hundred miles through the department, and is a sort of Nile on a small scale. In the rainy season it overflows its banks

¹ "Indios bravos."

for a considerable distance on both sides, leaving a thick deposit of alluvial mud. Then the grass grows luxuriantly and the cattle fatten quickly, even although the drought has left them thin.

The census of the year 1912 puts the population at 420,730, a small proportion in respect of so much territory. Upon the coast, and in especial in the town of Cartagena, the negro element prevails, but is rarely found in any numbers more than twenty miles inland. There the Indian, either pure-blooded or half-bred, prevails. In fact, he lives just where his ancestors lived at the first conquest of the land. The upper classes are in general white, with in some instances a dash of negro or of Indian blood.

Manners are patriarchal, though democratic, as always is the case in similar societies. Contrary to what is to be observed in Northern Europe, where men so often think that rudeness shows equality as between man and man, in the remote, neglected district of Bolívar, rudeness is held the attribute of brutes. Hence throughout all the length and breadth, not only of the province, but of the republic as a whole, good manners are a natural heritage.

Houses in the interior are few and far between, except upon the banks of the Sinú, where in some places they form a street on both sides of the stream. Nothing is more interesting than to ride through one of these straggling settlements; for several miles are cottages all made of canes and pitched with mud, supporting roofs either of reeds from the river banks or of banana leaves.

Here and there steep, worn paths lead down into

the river, and at the foot of them two or three canoes are certain to be tied, and round them groups of brown children paddle, but never shout or scream after the way of children in the north. Logs that look nothing but dead logs, may endue themselves with motion and become alligators, for logs and alligators are hardly distinguishable as they float downstream. The children never seem to notice them, but gambol on, as if no perils, either from them, from ray-fish, or the little devilish, sharp-toothed "caribés,"¹ existed in the world. Now and then one hears a tale of a child carried off by a "caiman"² just as one hears of children killed by a motor-bus. In neither case are the survivors rendered more wary by their companion's fate.

Sometimes a man brings down his horse, and standing knee deep pours water from a gourd over his back, and then perhaps, mounting him, swims a little, looking like a bronze figure in a fountain; then leads him dripping up the banks.

Life seems to pass in the fragile wigwams much as it passes in an Arab tent, but more industriously, for every dwelling has its yam and maize patch, surrounded by a little fence of canes, round which twine passion flowers and other creepers, whilst tall bushes of bougainvillea, orange bignonias, or crotons with their variegated leaves, peep up above the fence.

¹ Caribé=cannibal. These little fish, about the size of a dace, swarm in the rivers of Colombia, and are very dangerous to swimmers. Should anyone enter the water with a cut on his arm or leg, or chance to get wounded whilst swimming, his fate is pretty well assured. The caribés come to the scent of blood in shoals, and soon either tear the swimmer to bits or so disable him that he drowns. They are more feared than the alligators.

² Caiman=alligator.

A patriarchal, in a way idyllic, life goes on in these long streets of villages that edge the river banks.

No one is rich or poor. Fuel and clothes, the problems of the north, affect the people little. The earth yields crops with the minimum of cultivation, and fruit is plentiful. Outwardly there seems to be content; but no doubt envy, hatred, malice, and the rest of the passions with which men plague themselves the whole world over, are to be found there, as they were in the garden by the Tigris, when the world was young.

In many places virgin forests run down close to the river bank, forming an almost impenetrable barrier in their native state. All sorts of trees, many even to-day unplagued by botanists, spring up, rise to two hundred feet in height, and die, standing for a brief season, bald and sere, signposts upon the road of time; but signposts that endure only the space of two or three rainy seasons, so rapidly does nature claim them to fertilize another growth.

The Ceiba,¹ the Bongo, and the Campano tower above the rest, their roots, as it were, awash in the black earth, monstrous and gnarled. Bunches of lilac flowers hang from the Ceiba, as grapes hang from a vine, and they and all the other trees are full of orchids, and bound together with a thick cordage of lianas, whose flowers burst into bloom above the topmost branches of the woods.

The ground is deep in the débris of centuries,

¹ *Bombax ceiba*. The Campano and Bongo are, I think, of the same family. The Bongo is the silk-cotton of the West Indies, *Eriodendrum anfractuosum*.

and streams in places run under a tunnel of thick vegetation. Where they come to light, tortoises bask with their heads emerging from the water, and now and then a water-snake slips across from one side to another, looking just like a miniature sea-serpent as it swims by, with head and neck erected in the air.

Along the banks of streams and bayous, as they would be called in Texas and Louisiana, grow clumps of guaduas,¹ feathery and slight. Silence reigns eternally, for the parrots and macaws fly chattering about the edges of the forest and never penetrate its depths. One feels that nature is an actual force, not castrated and brought to heel by man, as in the countries men call civilized.

Silence reigns through the noonday heat, and as the evening brings its freshness the howling monkeys, locally known as araguatos,² begin their psalmody. The humming-birds, macaws, and the white ibises that frequent the marshes, all disappear, and vampire bats circle about on noiseless wings, hideous and menacing.

The forest, with its howling monkeys, its jaguars, rarely seen by day, but when they bound across an open glade, its tapirs and carpinchos,³ shy, semi-amphibious animals that only venture out at evening time, its flights of red and blue macaws and bright green parrots that hover chattering about the edge of the primeval woods, the wealth of vegetation and the

¹ Bamboos.

² *Simia ursina*.

³ *Hydrochœrus capybara*. Carpincho is the Argentine name. In Colombia the animal is called ponche, at least in Bolívar.

air of mystery and of hostility to man that emanates from the recesses of its everglades, is but a portion of the department after all. Its wealth is centred in its plains, natural, such as Los Llanos de Corozál, or artificial, as those about the banks of the Sinú that have been formed by burning off the jungle and sowing down the land reclaimed with the perennial grasses of Guinea and Pará.¹

The jungle cleared by fire is left just as a clearing in the woods is left in Western America or in Brazil, with all the stumps of the charred trees standing in a sea of ashes. The seed is sown and springs up after the first rains, and soon the stumps rot and decay away. The result is excellent pasture almost the whole year round. The fences are of native wood, and wire, and in the middle of the pastures clumps of trees are left for shelter.

These trees are the resort of flocks of parrots, and as you ride beneath them you are pretty sure to get a shower of broken twigs or nuts thrown by the howling monkeys or the small grey sajou,² who gambol in the boughs. Oviedo, in his "Historia Natural de las Indias," says: "When the Christians make an expedition to the interior, and have to pass by woods, they ought to cover themselves well with their bucklers . . . for the monkeys throw down nuts and branches at them." There may have been such danger when there were more monkeys or when

¹ Guinea grass is the well-known perennial grass of most tropical countries. Pará is a Brazilian perennial grass that grows to three feet in height; both are excellent pasture for cattle and resist almost any drought.

² *Simia sajou*.

their antics were less known to "Christians" than they are to-day. However, he goes on to say: "I knew one, Francisco de Villacastin, who was a servant of Pedrarias Davila, in Panama. This man threw a stone at a monkey,¹ who caught it and returned it with such force that it knocked out four or five of Francisco's teeth. I know this to be true," he says, "for I often saw the said Francisco, always without his teeth."² Waterton, in his "Wanderings of a Naturalist," says monkeys never throw things at people. The Bachiller Enciso was quite as good an observer as Waterton. He declares they do; the deficiency in Francisco's teeth surely goes for something as proof.

The cattle stand underneath the trees, or wander knee deep in the artificial grasses on the plains.

They are all tame and do not run before a mounted man as do the wilder herds of Venezuela, Texas, and the River Plate. The herdsmen work them with the lazo as in the other countries of America, both North and South, and they are rounded up once or twice weekly on to a bare space called "el rodeo" for counting, and to examine them for ticks. Mounted on their active, little horses, the herders round the cattle up, just as they do in other cattle countries. They use the saddle to be seen in Mexico, which ranges from the far north of Canada down to the Amazon; but never crosses it. Upon the other side it is replaced by the "recado" used in the River Plate.

¹ Oviedo writes "el gato"—that is, "the cat." The old explorers always referred to monkeys as "gatos monillos."

² "Muchos veces le vi, sin los dientes."

The bits of the Colombian cattlemen are of the long-branched Brazilian pattern. The reins are single, and the hand is held high, as it is held by all the horsemen of the world who ride for business and not merely as an amusement or for exercise.

The apparent future of the province lies in cattle-farming, although the recently discovered oil deposits may turn out valuable. There are at present, it is estimated, almost two million head of cattle in the department¹ of Bolivar and the adjoining state of Magdalena, across the river of that name. By burning jungle off and forming what are called "potreros," room could be made for nearly double the amount. Whether the present system of burning down fine timber to make room for cattle is sound economy, might well be arguable. However, it has existed since the conquest, and was the plan the Indians used long before they ever saw white men when they desired to plant a field of maize. The proceeding may be foolish and extravagant. On the other hand, it may be that it is the system most fitted for the country. Only time can show.

¹ The greatest length of the department is about two hundred and eighty miles; its greatest width about one hundred and forty.

CHAPTER II

OF all the towns of the department of Bolívar, Cartagena is the most picturesque. Not only is it the most old-world town of the department, but of the whole republic, and perhaps of the whole continent of South America. Mexico and Lima have, of course, the air of capitals. Their fine positions and the traditions that hang about them make them interesting and beautiful. Quito and Bogotá, La Paz and Sucre are strange old-world places that have got into a backwater, as it were, of time. Santiago de Chile looks towards the Andes, and in the middle of the town rises a hill like those of Edinburgh and Prague. Of Buenos Aires nobody need speak. It is the Paris of the New World. Monte Video is a city set upon a hill, sun-warmed and wind-swept, ever increasing, but still Spanish to the core, with its wide streets and plazas full of flowers.

Rio, Bahia, Santos, Pernambuco, and the Brazilian ports in general are marvels of the tropics, yet Cartagena still holds its own as a thing unique in the New World. No wonder that its citizens call it affectionately Cartagenita, or El Corralito de Piedras, in allusion to its ring of walls.

The blue, pellucid sea, broken but when a huge iridescent, tropic fish springs up into the air and falls with a resounding splash, washes the walls, against whose base there plays a ring of milk-white surf. Tall, whispering palm-trees cluster on the sands, their roots in water and their heads in fire. Among them shallow wells are dug, known as "cacimbas," and fresh, cool water fills them within but fifty feet away from the seashore.

Thickets of icaco, called by the people of the place "uvas de playa,"¹ surround the walls, and from them hang long clusters of a fruit, sufficiently like grapes to bear the name. All day the old, white town basks in the sun, and at the Ave Maria, when the innumerable church bells jangle and clang, a breeze springs up from off the sea. Nature and man revive, and as it rustles in the palms a thin, white cloud of mist or spray seems to envelop all the city and its green gardens, letting them just appear beneath it, with all their colours toned down and softened, just as you catch the tone of caftan and burnoose under the fleecy texture of a diaphanous haik from Fez or Mequinez, as a rich Moor rides past in Africa.

In the dark, winding streets, where houses, over whose iron-studded doors are cut the crests of conquerors, men stand before the grated windows, as they do in Seville or in Cordoba, whispering the tale, so wearisome to any but the ear it is intended for; old as the world, but which will yet be fresh after a thousand years have passed away.²

¹ Grapes of the shore. It is *Chrysobalanus icaco*.

² A Spanish writer says about these bars and gratings: "Las balconerias y rejas son de madera, materia de mas resistencia en aquel

The city once was the place of meeting of the great Plate fleet, that took the silver gathered together from all the mines of the New World, across the seas to Spain. Many a time the British and French corsairs hung off and on, just out of sight of land, to attack it with varying success.

Hawkins and Frobisher—known to the Spaniards of those days as “Aquino” and “Ofrisba”—must have often seen its walls, the tops of the white houses, and the palm-trees, as they lay outside La Boca Grande watching for chance galleons.

From the beginning the city was a prey to corsairs. In 1544 “certain French rovers attacked it, guided by a Corsican who had lived long within its walls,” as says one of its chroniclers.

In 1585 a greater far than he, Sir Francis Drake, to whom the said old chronicler refers as a “pirata ingle,” plundered and burnt the town, and then sailed off with his ships laden down with loot, conscious of having deserved well of his country and his God. He seems to have been one of our earliest empire-builders; but naturally a different opinion is held about his exploits in England from the opinion held in Spain.¹

temple, que el hierro.” In fact, iron soon exfoliates and decays when exposed to weather in Cartagena, on account of the damp climate and the salt breezes from the sea. (Jorge Juan, in his “Viage la America Meridional,” Madrid, 1748).

¹ It is sometimes forgotten that, when Drake and the rest of his bold compeers, so to speak, “worked” the Spanish Main, Spain and England were at peace. This in a measure justifies the celebrated speech of Gondomar to James I. (and VI.) when he burst suddenly into the presence with a cry of “Pirates! Pirates!” and refused to add another word.

After Drake's crowning mercy, the exploits of a French filibuster, one Pointis, in 1697, seem a little tame. This bold sea-rover also sacked and burned the town, but in a trifling Latin way, without apparently a thought of principle, of idealism, or indeed any of those stalking-horses dear to the Saxon mind. The futile Frenchman seems to have been merely a business man, and all the plunder that he got can have been little after so skilled and up-to-date practitioner as Drake had been at work, only ten years before.

Don Pedro de Heredia founded the city in 1533. It had been visited by the celebrated Alonso de Ojeda, the companion of Columbus, in 1510. He endeavoured to found a town there, but the Indians of the place defeated him and forced him to flee for his life with the loss of all the soldiers who had accompanied him as far as a place called Turbaco, some twelve miles distant from the coast.

Amongst his men perished the celebrated Juan de la Cosa, the cartographer, and pilot of Columbus on his second voyage. Ojeda himself struggled back to the coast alone, almost in a dying condition and badly wounded. Left in a miserable position with the remnant of his men shut up in an Indian village, where now stands Cartagena (but then known as Calamar), Ojeda was wellnigh desperate. For two years he and another conqueror, Captain Diego de Nicueza, had been at open war with one another. However, Nicueza, hearing of his rival's wretched state, sailed for Cartagena and placed his fleet and soldiers at the disposition of Ojeda.

Thus reinforced, the two captains drove back the Indians and determined to found a town. Fresh troubles with the Indians forced them to abandon the place, and Ojeda, wounded by a poisoned arrow, returned to die in the Habana, after incredible adventures, his ship having been driven ashore on the coast of Cuba, and himself forced to continue his journey on foot, enduring hardships that would have overwhelmed an ordinary man. Arrived in the Habana, though his wound was cured, he fell into poverty and died in misery.

So perished one of the most brilliant and romantic figures of the conquest. He it was, before Columbus sailed, who ran out to the end of a beam fixed at a dizzy height in the cathedral tower, known as La Giralda, at Seville, and before Ferdinand and Isabella and the assembled populace threw a tennis ball over the weathercock.

From 1510 until 1533 the Bay of Cartagena seems to have been only occasionally visited.

Diego de Nicueza, Ojeda's rival and friend, perished even more miserably than himself. A revolt of his men forced him to put to sea in a launch with only sixteen companions. They either drove ashore and were slaughtered by the Indians or their launch was swallowed up by the waves, for they were never seen again.

Herrera, in his history of the Indies, says that Diego de Nicueza was of a noble family and had been "Yeoman of the Mouth"¹ in the household of Don Enrique Enriquez, uncle of Ferdinand the

¹ "Trinchante."

Catholic. He was, so says Herrera, a great courtier and very witty, a fine horseman and an accomplished performer on the lute. As Colonel Joaquin Acosta, in his "Compendio Historico del Descubrimiento y Colonizacion de la Nueva Granada," somewhat unkindly remarks, "Nicueza had no opportunity of exercising any of those accomplishments on the coast of Colombia."

A harbour so well sheltered, and a site so fitted for a town, could not escape for long the observation of the adventurers who flocked from Spain in shoals during the early portion of the fifteenth century. Few ports in the whole world are better sheltered or less exposed to wind. Built on a sandy, wide-stretching island which it almost entirely covers, the city's north-west walls stand facing the open sea. The south-east portion of the wall runs along the harbour.

Another island, known anciently as Xiximani, lies to the eastward, and is connected with the first by a long causeway, and another high-raised road connects both islands with the land. Above the town towers the hill called La Popa, from its resemblance to the stern of an old Spanish galleon. Woods clothe its sides, and on the top is an old convent, visible miles out at sea.

The port itself is twofold and runs to about six miles inland, with a width varying from two to four miles at the broadest point. Two narrow entrances—called respectively La Boca Grande and La Boca Chica—defended by old, mouldering Spanish forts, give access to the bay. The humpbacked island called Tierra Bomba lies just inside La Boca Chica, and as

a vessel gradually opens up the town a splendid panorama is disclosed.

Fear of the "English corsairs" caused the inhabitants to block up La Boca Grande, so that all vessels have to enter by the smaller mouth. As in old times the Spaniards did all things solidly, and built to defy the ravages of time, they made a sure job of La Boca Grande. A solid wall, almost cyclopean in its proportions, extends across the entrance, more than a mile in width. It rises to within a few feet of the surface, and it is said that in the middle a narrow gap was left, just wide enough to let a vessel pass. This gap either never existed, or the action of the waves has quite destroyed it, for it has never been found in modern times. Small craft can cross the sunken wall, and it could easily be blown up with dynamite.

On a less gigantic scale than Rio de Janeiro (that marvel of the world), without the backing of the Organ Mountains, or the high peaks of the Tijuca such as its greater rival prides herself upon, without the lofty Sugar Loaf towering above the narrow entrance to the enormous island-dotted bay, yet Cartagena has charms and traditions of its own that Rio de Janeiro never could have claimed. It may be that the vegetation of the more northern harbour is a shade less luxuriant; it may be that the hill on which is built the convent of La Popa is insignificant beside La Gabia; still, Cartagena does not found her charm upon mere natural advantages, though those are great; but upon history and tradition and on the incomparable picturesqueness of the town and of its monumental walls. Built of the finest masonry, and thirty

feet at least in height, they ring the city round, giving it an air of Avila, San Gemignano, or of Aigues Mortes, gone astray into the tropics. In places the walls go sheer into the sea. In others they take advantage of the natural position of the ground and leave only a narrow road between them and a mangrove swamp.

At La Tenaza¹ they are machicolated, and a deep tunnel connects them with a flanking tower. At the Cabrero, a small spit of land, on which stands the white, mosque-like church, raised to the memory of President Nuñez, and finishing in a long, sandy street, over which wave ever-murmuring coco-palms, the walls tower high above the houses, as the ground rises towards that point. From them you look down upon the tops of villas and on a sea of brightly flowering shrubs and trees. Long lines of *Ponciana Regias*, with their long clusters of bright, scarlet flowers, two feet in length, shade the avenue on which the villas stand. A crimson bougainvillea, known locally as "la flor del Habana," and a bright blood-red creeper called in Colombia "la bellisima" (a most appropriate name), bignonias, crotons, and all kinds of flowering plants, unknown outside the tropics, bury the suburb of El Cabrero in a sea of colour and make the white walls of the little monumental church appear still whiter than they are.

The top of the encircling medieval ramparts is so broad, that four carriages could pass quite easily, and up the inclined planes of masonry a motor-car

¹ La Tenaza is a fortified postern gate. Admiral Vernon's forces were defeated there in the attack on Cartagena in 1741.

can—and often does at evening time, when the sea breeze blows freshly and the whole city withers as in a furnace—perform the circuit of the walls. Such walls, such bastions, and such flanking towers, such massive gates and drawbridges, cost, as they say in South America, a Potosi. So often was the exchequer, far away in Spain, called on for grants to finish them, that tradition says one evening in the Escorial, Philip the Second, the prudent king, whose aphorism was, “Time and myself against three others,” dressed we may suppose in the black, velvet suit, the livery of the House of Austria, was observed by his courtiers to gaze westward earnestly.

He did not speak, as was his wont—is it not historical that when he received the news of the defeat of “La Invincible,” as it is called in Spain, he merely looked up from his desk and said, “There is still oak enough in Spain to build another”?

So long he gazed that the Duke of Alba asked him, “What is it that your majesty is looking for?” The answer was, “I am looking for the walls of Cartagena. They cost so much, they must be visible from here.”

CHAPTER III

HARDLY was Cartagena settled when the stream of adventure and of discovery set inward from the coast. It turned quite naturally first to the province of Sinú, as the department of Bolívar was then called. Long before this—or what was long in such an epoch-making period as was the conquest of America—the Sinú had been visited and described.

In 1519 appeared at Seville the rare and curious book, “*La Suma de Geografia del Bachiller Martin Fernandez de Enciso, Alguacil Mayor de Castilla de Oro.*” Amongst the many curious diaries, or logs, of soldiers and discoverers, few are more curious or more exact in every detail than that of the aforesaid Alguacil Mayor.

The general outline of the coast he gives is as correct as that of any modern map. The notes on the inhabitants, the fauna, flora, and the configuration of the soil, are so informing and minute that I know of no modern work on the Sinú that can compare with it.

Many of the conquerors of the New World wielded the pen almost as well as they did lance or sword. Cortés, in his five letters giving an account of all that he had done in Mexico, to the Emperor

Charles V., showed himself not only master of a vigorous style, but of a cultivated mind. His powers of observation and description were rare in any man ; but in his case the more extraordinary as he was first and foremost, at the time, a man of war. Of all the greater conquerors of the New World he was the man who had received most education. When he first appeared in public life in the Habana he was a lawyer, and Bernal Diaz says : "I heard tell he was a bachelor of laws,¹ and, when he spoke to men of letters and Latinists, he answered in that tongue." He may have graduated either at Salamanca or at Alcala ; but even if he did, that did not make him a good writer or give him his penetrating view into the hearts of men. "What Nature does not give, Salamanca cannot lend,"² the proverb goes, and in his case all that the university could do was to give polish to a brilliant that always must have shone.

His great lieutenant, Pedro de Alvarado — he whom the Mexicans referred to as "El Sol" in the two reports sent from his government of New Galicia — showed himself little inferior to his chief.

These reports by men such as Cortés, to Spain, or by inferior officers to their chiefs, as in the case of Alvarado, Diego Godoy,³ and others, form a great feature in the literature of the conquest of the New World, hardly to be equalled in their kind. Many of the conquerors wrote actual histories. Amongst these, two will ever shine above the rest. The

¹ "Bachiller en leyes."

² "Quod Natura non dat, Salamanca non præstat."

³ Another lieutenant of Cortés.

splendid history of the Conquest of Peru, by Pedro Cieza de Leon, who from the age of fifteen up to twenty-seven wrote by the light of the camp-fire each evening all that happened in the day, contains an account of the Incas and their government which is unrivalled even by that composed by Garcilasso de la Vega (Inca), whose mother was a princess of their line.

Nothing in all the literature of all those stirring times can equal for simplicity and truth, for observation, charity, and sense, the chronicle that the stout soldier, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, wrote of Mexico and of its siege and fall. Prescott gets all his colour from it. Sometimes he acknowledges the debt in footnotes, but now and then appears to incorporate long passages without acknowledgment.

Ercillas' epic poem of the wars in Chile with the Araucanos, was written upon scraps of paper, pieces of hide, on bones and bark, as he himself informs us, and there are several histories of the kind, written with the sword and arquebuse laid ready to the hand. The Bachiller Enciso was, as his title shows, an educated man, holding high office in the newly conquered territory. For all his accuracy and observation of the countries, his well-written logs, and careful estimates of distances from one port to another, so careful that they would serve to take a vessel from Santa Marta right to Panamá almost without a chart, he yet shows a simplicity of mind not to be found in more sophisticated days.

Perhaps it is the turn of phrase that seems to us more simple than it was. Perhaps the newness of

the scenes he wrote of caused him to write, as Spaniards say, with his soul in his hand,¹ but the effect is something differing in essence from that produced by any traveller to-day.

The sense of mystery is gone out of the world. Better communications have destroyed it. Even the conquest of the air, with all its wonder and its difficulty, cannot and never will produce a man apart, a sailor of the air, differing in speech, in life, and point of view, from those who crawl upon the earth, as was the sailor of the seas. We know the Bachiller Enciso was in Darien in 1515, under the orders of the celebrated Pedrarias Davila. Thus the work written in 1518 (the date of what is called in Spanish the "privilege"²—that is, the licence, showing it had been examined and approved both by the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities) evidently was done when the impressions of the voyages were still fresh in his mind.

As he made, in or about the year 1515, two voyages up and down the coast from Panamá to the Cabo de la Vela, perhaps he had his log books to assist him in his work. This most rare book for long was only known to exist in a single copy in the National Library in Paris, though perhaps it may have been reprinted recently.

Of all the coast, down to the Cabo de la Vela, he has preserved most curious details. Thus he tells us that near Santa Marta all the gravel on the beach looks as if it had been gilded, adding, "though this is not the case." "The Indians," he says, "have much

¹ "El alma en la palma."

² "Privilegio."

gold and copper, which they know how to colour just like gold. This they do with the juices of a certain herb that grows upon that coast, passing the copper through a fire."

Stags and wild boars¹ were plentiful, just as they are to-day. He gives the first account of the celebrated manchineel-tree, so often spoken of by the older navigators. Speaking of the poisoned arrows which the natives use, he tells how they procure the poison chiefly from the apple of a tree that grows close to the water's edge. "If a man," he says, "eats of the apple of that tree his body soon is filled with maggots, and if by chance he sleeps beneath its shade his head begins to ache, his face swells hideously, and if he does not rise and come away he becomes blind or dies." What modern science says about the manchineel I am uncertain; but there can be no doubt that travel in the days of the Bachiller Enciso had attractions that have disappeared to-day.

The Indians between Santa Marta and a port called Zamba "were all good people, and do harm to nobody, unless the others first begin."² Not an unnatural state of mind for savages, and one that might be copied with profit by the most civilized of men.

A little farther on, and, I regret to say near Cartagena, where I protest I never should have thought at any time the ladies so behaved, the women all went naked, and fought as fiercely as the men, shooting their arrows desperately and far.

¹ Probably peccaries.

² "Es buena gente, que no hace mal . . . si a ellos no gelo hacen primero."

“I had,” he says, “a girl whom I took prisoner, of twenty years of age. She told me that in the battle, when she was taken by our men, she had killed eight Christians.”¹ To my regret, the Bachiller says nothing more about this amazon. By all the laws, both of expediency and war, she should have married some stout soldier of the Bernal Diaz type of man, and brought up warlike sons. Perhaps the Bachiller married her himself; but on this matter he preserves an absolute discretion, keeping most strictly to such things as appertain to the mission of a “Christian governor.”

His first account of the Sinú—or, as he always writes it, Cenu—occurs when he mentions that, from Cartagena to the Port of the Cenu, there are some twenty or more leagues. This is the actual distance to the port now called Cispata, which lies, as the Bachiller Enciso says, in a large bay, formed by the river’s mouth. In the Cenu, he says, much salt is made, and this continues to be made down to the present day. In ancient times, amongst the Indians of South America, salt was a scarce commodity, and was so highly valued that in some places it was used as currency.

The infidels² in those parts used to make mummies of the bodies of their chiefs, painting their faces, putting crowns of feathers on their heads, and placing bows and arrows in their hands. This done,

¹ “Ocho hombres cristianos.”

² “Los infieles.” This word has always seemed to me to be used with singularly little application to men such as the Indians of America, who had had no chance of being faithful to anything, but their own gods.

they set the bodies up in some convenient place, and offered up to them bits of old rag, fruits, broken arrows, or anything they had. This was not done, apparently, in worship, but as an act of homage, or for memory, just as we put a tombstone over graves.

Padre Simon,¹ the best authority on things Colombian of the early days, informs us that at Zipaquirá they found offered up to an idol a rosary, a priest's biretta, and a Guide to the Confessional ("Un Libro de Casos de Conciencia"). Whether the Indian devotee had some knotty point upon his conscience, or whether the book to him was simply a "great medicine," is, and must always be, buried in mystery. Possibly the first mention of mandioca,² or cazabe, bread is to be found in the pages of the Bachiller.

"There are roots," he says, "of which they make their bread, as they do in Cuba, Jamaica, and in Hispaniola; but they are of another quality, for those of the islands are all poisonous, and if a man eats of them he dies infallibly, as if he had taken arsenic, and to make bread of them they must be boiled and scraped, before that they are ground.

"In the Cenu, upon the contrary, the people eat the roots raw or roasted, and they are wholesome and sweet-tasted" ("de gentil sabor"). He was evidently unaware that there are several kinds of manioc, and that the wild variety is poisonous till it has been treated, as he has explained. The Indians also had another kind of bread made out of Indian corn.

¹ "Conquista de Tierra Firme" (edition of Bogotá, 1892).

² *Jatropha manioc*.

This bread is quite unlike all other kinds of bread made out of maize or Indian corn.” It was the staple food of the Indians of the coast of Colombia and Panamá, at the conquest, and has remained in use (upon the coast) amongst all classes down to the present day. The celebrated navigator, Jorge Juan,¹ speaking of this bread, says: “It has no likeness to wheaten bread either in colour or taste, but is insipid in extreme.” It is rolled up in a maize or a banana leaf, in pieces about the size of a small sausage. The local name is “bollo,” and Oviedo in his “Historia Natural de las Indias” gives the following description of it: “The Indian women grind the maize² between two stones . . . and as they grind it mix a little water with it, which by degrees converts the flour into a paste. Then taking a bit of the leaf of a plant of that country, or of the maize itself, they roll it up and make a cake of it.” This is the way the people of the Colombian coast make it to-day, and I can certify that it has, as was said by Jorge Juan, neither the colour nor the taste of bread; also that it is insipid to the last degree when cold, but tolerable to hungry men when warm—that is to say, if there is nothing in the world to serve as substitute. How little necessity the Indians had to offer up books of “Casos de Conciencia” to their idols is shown by the following passage, which redounds as much to the credit of their reasoning powers as to

¹ Jorge Juan y Ulloa: “Relacion Historica del Viage á la America Meridional” (Madrid, 1749).

² He spells it “mahiz.” This was the original spelling, for it is a Carib word, first heard by the Spaniards in Santo Domingo, and by them carried over the whole world.

the open-minded attitude of the Bachiller, who quotes all that they say, without a comment on it.

“I notified, from the King of Castile, two caciques of the Cenu, that we were followers of the said King, and that we had come to let them know that there was only but one God, who was in three parts, and yet one.¹ That he was Ruler of the heavens and the earth. That God had come down upon earth and left St. Peter to rule for him. That St. Peter had left as his successor the Holy Father, and that the Holy Father was Lord of heaven and earth, acting on behalf of God. That the said Holy Father as Lord of the universe had made a present of all the Indies, including the Cenu, to the King of Castile. I further notified them that in virtue of this gift they were all subjects of the aforesaid King. That they must pay him full obedience, and send him something² every year. If they did this the King would help them against their enemies, and send them friars and priests to indoctrinate them in the Christian faith.

“This said, I asked them for their answer, which they gave, saying, . . . that as to there being but one God, Ruler of heaven and earth, it seemed quite reasonable ; but that the Pope was Lord of heaven and earth on God’s behalf, and acting with that power had given their land to the King of Castile, they looked upon it as the action of a madman.

“The Pope, they said, must have been drunk when he did such a foolish thing as to give away something that never had belonged to him, and the King,

¹ “Que era trino y uno.”

² “Alguna cosa cada año.”

who received it, just as mad as the Pope. . . . They said that they were lords of their own territory, and wanted nothing either from Pope or King. I again notified plainly to them that in that case I would make war upon them and sell them all for slaves. Their answer was that they would kill me and stick my head upon a pole. This they tried hard to do, but we were too strong for them and took their villages, though they killed two of our men with poisoned arrows, although their wounds were small."

In fact, civilization, as we know, must enter in with blood. The curious thing about it all is the attitude of mind of the Bachiller Enciso, for he was no rough soldier, as was Pizarro or Valdivia, but an educated man. The fact that he makes no comment on the affair, or on the answer that the Indians gave to what he must have known was arrant nonsense and the rankest of injustice, is most significant. Most of the other conquerors who often found themselves in similar predicaments—notably Cortés in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru—are loud in condemnation of the Indians' folly and of their insolence in not accepting out of hand a king and a religion quite unknown to them and offered with the alternative of death. The Bachiller's position was quite different from theirs, for, before passing from the narration of his missionary efforts, he tells us: "I took a chieftain in another part of the Cenu . . . and found him to be a very truthful man,¹ who kept his word on all occasions, one who knew good from evil as well as any man."² He does not add "as well as any Chris-

¹ "Hombre de mucha verdad."

² "Y que le parecía mal, lo malo, y bien, lo bueno."

tian," though he might have done so. Perhaps deep in his heart of hearts he was ashamed to do so, knowing, as he himself must well have done, that what is right is right, and what is evil evil, as did the Indian chief.

It is most curious to read the account Enciso gives of all the animals he saw whilst travelling in the district of the Sinú. His descriptions certainly are quaint, but still most accurate, and not a trace of the marvellous enters into them any more than it would enter into the head of one of our most modern hunters after "specimens," who go out with their comfortable tents, camps, beds, and medicines, and their quick-firing slaughter rifles. Theology and natural history he seemed to keep apart in reason-tight compartments, just as some scientific men of our own times keep science upon one side of their heads and superstition on the other, without allowing the least ray of light to fall on the dark side.

In the high mountains near the Gulf of Urabá, he says, "there is great store of lions and of tigers,¹ and long-tailed cats like monkeys, only their tails are longer.

"Wild boars are plentiful, and animals almost as large as cows, of a brown colour, their heads like mules, with longish ears, and feet exactly like the cow's."

This animal was, of course, the tapir, and, though the description may sound strange to modern ears, it is most accurate.

¹ It is to be remembered that both the English and Spaniards referred to the puma as a lion, and the jaguar as a tiger.

“Ounces, they say, are found, but I have never seen them; but what I did see as I crossed a river in those parts were lizards of huge size. These lizards lie about the banks, and if an animal or an incautious Christian passes by, they rush and seize him, carrying him off below the surface of the stream to make a meal of him.”

Even to-day the “incautious Christian” is carried off occasionally by those same lizards that Enciso writes about. In this respect, I am in the same position as was the Bachiller in regard to the ounces, for, though I have seen Christians sufficiently incautious of their lives and reputations, I never saw one eaten by an alligator, though I have heard of it as taking place.

With not unnatural pride the Bachiller relates that it was he who caught the first of these great lizards, and tells, quite in the manner of our own great naturalist Waterton, the struggle that he and his followers had to despatch the alligator. The point at which I join issue with him is when he says that the flesh of these lizards, although it smells of musk, is of a pleasant flavour, white and nice.¹

Either the first conquerors were not particular, or food was very scarce.

His best description, considered as a literary effort, and one that does great credit to his powers of observation, is of the armadillo, about which he says: “There are in this land little animals about as big as is a sucking-pig. They have got feet and hands just like a horse, and their head is just like that of a little

¹ “Blanca y gentil.”

horse with its corresponding ears. It is all covered with a shell from its head to its tail. Thus it looks like a horse when it has armour on. These animals are very handsome to look upon. They also graze just like a horse.”¹

The curious thing about this, possibly the first description of the armadillo, is that it should also have struck Oviedo, the writer on natural history of the Indies, as being like a horse. Oviedo, who was in Panamá about the same time as was the Bachiller Enciso, although his great work “*La Historia Natural de las Indias*,” did not appear till some years afterwards, either had seen the work of his compatriot or talked with him about the animal.

He says these animals are well worth looking at by Christians;² Christians, indeed, have many things beneath their noses well worth looking at. They rarely see them, being, perhaps, absorbed in higher matters. Luckily for us, Oviedo and the Bachiller Enciso had their attention turned upon sublunary affairs. Simple as are the observations of Enciso, they yet have an impress of truth and of sincerity that makes them priceless to the student of a district such as the Sinú, so little written of in modern times.

¹ “En esta tierra ay unos animales pequeños como un lechon de un mes. Estos tienen los pies y las manos como un caballo encubertado, con sus orejuelas, y esta todo cubierto de una concha desde las orejas hasta la cola, que parece un caballo encubertado; son fermosos de mirar, pacen como un caballo.” It is only fair to say that “mano” in Spanish is used for the forefoot of a horse. In point of fact, the armadillo has claws and not “manos” like a horse. As to their being “fermosos de mirar” . . . well, well. . . . “Hay gustos que merecen palos.”

² “Son animales mucho de ver para los Cristianos.”

CHAPTER IV

AFTER the Bachiller Enciso had published his notes upon the flora, fauna, and the Indians of the Sinú, preserving for us, as in a slightly distorted but still achromatic glass, glimpses of all he saw, no mention of the province is to be found till the year 1533. In that year Pedro de Heredia was named governor of all the territory from the mouth of the River Magdalena up to Darien. Having sailed from Cadiz towards the end of 1532, he disembarked in Cartagena upon January 14th of the year 1533.

Heredia had already had considerable experience of the New World; as lieutenant to Vadillo, governor of Santa Marta, he had taken part in all his expeditions, and had accompanied his lieutenant Palamino upon the last of all. On this occasion Palamino's horse at the crossing of a river suddenly got into deep water and with his rider disappeared. In a short time the horse came up and swam to shore, but Palamino was never seen again, either alive or dead.

Thus Heredia was no neophyte in America, but a man who understood completely, all that was required for an expedition to the New World. It has been well observed by a writer on the Conquest of

New Granada¹ (Colombia) that all the expeditions that were fitted out from Haiti or from Santo Domingo—that is, the island we call Hispaniola, and the Spaniards knew as la Isla Española (the Spanish Island)—were more successful than those that came from Spain.

Certain it is that the expedition of Cortés was fitted out in the Habana; that of Pizarro in Panamá. Legaspi also, the conqueror of the Philippines, started from Mexico. Nearly all the expeditions that came from Spain were commanded either by courtiers or at least by noblemen. These, even, though some of whom certainly had had experience in the Italian wars, were quite at sea in the Americas. Generally they arrived in shining armour, or in embroidered clothes, bringing with them a long train of pages, followers, secretaries, and others of the kind. The expeditions that started either from Cuba or Hispaniola were composed of a very different class. In them came men accustomed to the climate, trained to bear arms within the tropics, good horsemen, for horses soon become plentiful and wild in the West Indies, and your wild horse makes your good rider, better than he can possibly be made in military riding schools.

These men, cruel and bigoted no doubt, were worth a dozen of those fresh from Spain, and called “bisoños,”² or “chapetones,” by the Spaniards. In his youth Heredia had been, as was Cortés, a famous duellist. Having had his nose almost cut off in a

¹ “Compendio Historico del Descubrimiento de la Nueva Granada” (Colonel Joaquin Acosta. Paris, 1848).

² Bisoño=a raw soldier. Chapeton corresponds to the American “tenderfoot,” or the Australian “new chum.”

street fight in Madrid, after it was repaired ("reparado") by a good surgeon, he never rested till he had slain three of his assailants. This was the cause that took him with his good sword (and his repaired nose) to the New World.

Having landed at Santo Domingo, he had the luck, in a short time, to inherit a large estate there. This got him the chance to go as lieutenant to Vadillo, governor of Santa Marta, to the new colony upon the coast. There he distinguished himself greatly, and in a few years went home to Spain, after the fashion of the conquerors of those days, to get himself made governor of a portion of the newly conquered territory. He chose a small, but well-selected expedition, consisting of but one hundred and fifty soldiers, all seasoned men, many of whom had already been in the Indies. With him came, as lieutenant, Francisco César, who gave his name to the great river, still partially unexplored, upon whose banks he lost his life. Pedro de Alcazar and Captain Muio de Castro also were officers of his, and it is said that descendants of both of them are to be found, either in Cartagena or in the province, down to the present day. Heredia did not bring rich furniture, brocades, or pictures, as other of the captains who had sailed from Spain had done. Instead of that, he put aboard his ships great store of ammunition, cannons and muskets, swords, lances, and defensive armour, fitted for warfare in hot countries.

He took much wine and flour and, with a forethought that shows him to have been a born explorer, he had constructed a large barge, of little draught, to

sail up rivers and to penetrate their creeks. All the expense of the expedition he bore himself, settling it with the gold he had won by force of arms in Santa Marta and upon the coast. He touched at Puerto Rico and took on board some of the companions of Sebastian Cabot, who had accompanied him on his disastrous voyage up the River Plate.

In Santo Domingo he found remains of the expeditions that had been in Venezuela with Captains Sedeño and Orgaz. These were all men accustomed to the climate and experienced in Indian warfare, and proved a tower of strength to him when he began to fight. They advised him to have made articulated breastplates of stout leather, as a defence against the poisoned arrows used by the Indians of the coast.

He then sailed for Cartagena, taking on board forty-seven horses, but so stormy is the Caribbean Sea, and the ships of that time were so slow and little seaworthy, that twenty-seven of the horses perished in the short crossing from the islands to the coast. This was a great misfortune, for horses played so great a part in all the battles of the conquest of the Americas.

It is uncertain whether Cartagena¹ was first so called by Ojeda or by Bastidas;² but when Don Pedro

¹ The Indian name was Calamar.

² Rodrigo de Bastidas was a native of Seville, who founded Santa Marta. He died of the effects of wounds given him in a mutiny, though he reached Cuba before his death. Padre Simon, in his "Historia de la Conquista de Tierra Firme," says of him that "he was a man of good reputation and good family, and esteemed by all." The great Las Casas writes of him: "I always knew him kind in his dealings with the Indians, and a severe critic [blasfemaba de los que

de Heredia arrived there, it already bore that name. Here, the expedition ran considerable danger, for they made their land-fall close to Santa Marta, and coasting on, as was the habit in those days, were nearly wrecked somewhere about the mouth of the River Magdalena; probably not far from the point which juts out near the long pier of Puerto Colombia, called Sabanilla by the Spaniards of those days. Colonel Acosta¹ says that Heredia's vessels entered the harbour by the Boca Grande (now closed up), but that they did not disembark until next day.

No Indians were to be seen, but a horse having wandered off to feed, the Indians came out of a wood and tried to seize upon him. Heredia, with fifteen men, attacked them and drove them all before him to their village (Calamar), which they deserted upon his approach. Water was scarce and brackish, so, guided by an old Indian called Corinche, whom they had taken prisoner, but who stayed with them voluntarily (perhaps attracted by the novelty of all he saw amongst them), they set out for a place called Zamba, farther down the coast. Heredia had brought with him from Santo Domingo an Indian girl from Zamba, who had been taken prisoner several years before. She had been baptized by the name of Catalina, and had become a Christian, and, as often happened in those days with Indian prisoners, proved of great

les hacian agravios] of those who injured them." This was high praise from such a man, and Las Casas was always sparing of his praise.

¹ "Compendio Historico del Descubrimiento de la Nueva Granada" (Paris, 1848).

service to the conquerors. How much Cortés was helped in Mexico by the Indian princess called Malinche, is one of the romantic episodes of the whole great adventure of the conquest of America.

As they marched on, Heredia riding on a fiery horse—for, as the chronicler remarks, “the things and animals of men take on a likeness to their masters”—they came upon a town. The inhabitants attacked them furiously. The battle raged three hours, and Heredia lost two horses and a man or two. As he was “lancing and disembowelling the Indians with great satisfaction,”¹ he nearly perished, suffocated by his steel cuirass and helmet, designed for use in the colder climates of the north. He would have fallen from his horse, and in that case have lost his life, had not his followers, perceiving the condition he was in, rushed up and hastened to disarm him speedily. This saved his life, and he was spared to lance and disembowel many Indians at a future date, no doubt with equal satisfaction to himself. These Indians were the Turbacos, and in their territory, not far from where their village was, and where now stands the town of Turbaco, are to be found the celebrated little mud-volcanoes, described by Humboldt in his account of Venezuela and Colombia.

They are situated in a glade underneath a hill, are about eighteen in number, and now and then send up

¹ “Iba cebandose en alancear y destripar los Indios” (Padre Simon). He did not always have things all his own way, for on one occasion his horse, a hard-mouthing brute (“tenia un caballo tan duro de boca”) took him into the middle of the enemy. The horse emerged so full of arrows that he looked like a hedgehog, says Father Simon. Its life was saved by repeated bathings in salt-water. “Thus, he did not die, as so many [horses?] died, by arrow wounds.”

a shower of mud. In fact, the little cones are more like geysers than volcanoes, for some of them are but flat, open mouths. From Turbaco comes the water which to-day supplies the capital. Curiously enough, the want of water in Turbaco in those days was what led Heredia to retrace his steps to Cartagena when he determined to erect a town.

Before he started on his backward journey to the coast, he conscientiously burned down the Indian village, leaving it, as Padre Simon tells us, "a heap of ashes, and having abandoned heaps of the bodies of dead Indians to the birds of prey." To do him justice, the good Father does not exult in the exploit of Heredia, but tells the episode quite feelingly, much in the spirit that a man, seated in his club, who reads that an earthquake has overwhelmed ten or twelve thousand Chinamen in some remote place on the Yiangsi, exclaims, "Poor things!" and goes on with his tea.

Don Pedro de Heredia solemnly founded the city of Cartagena, and named magistrates on January 21st, under the patronage of St. Sebastian, both because it was his day, and in remembrance of his own escape from poisoned arrows in the fight. I should be loath to disagree with any member of the clergy on such a point as the right day that appertains to any saint. Padre Simon was a professional, and it is seldom wise to disagree with men about points of their own profession, as a mere amateur. For all that, Father Ribadenyra, in his "*Flos Sanctorum*,"¹ a monumental

¹ "*Flos Sanctorum*." Por el Padre Pedro de Ribadenyra, de la Compañía de Jesus (Natural de Toledo), Barcelona, en la Imprenta

work, in which are to be read the lives and miracles of all the saints of any consequence, says that the saint of Narbonne passed into Paradise upon the twentieth of the month.

As the Bay of Cartagena was rich in fishings, several Indian tribes were found established on its shores. In Boca Chica there reigned a chief called Carex, and when Heredia heard of him he sent the Indian woman Catalina to offer him the friendship of the King of Spain. The chief, who probably had heard about the exploits of the Spaniards up and down the coast, replied that the Christians were only a band of thieves and murderers, and, for his part, he would resist them to the death.

Heredia, of course, set out to reduce the village, and after a stiff fight, in which he killed many of the Indians, took the chief prisoner. In this adventure they took an Indian who united in himself the threefold functions of doctor, sorcerer, and priest—functions which even now are sometimes to be found united in one man.

Padre Simon calls him a person of some repute in the district.¹ Therefore Heredia elevated him to the position of ambassador and sent him on a mission to a chief. This reputable man, whose name, as it chanced, was Caron, set out in a canoe. No one at first was willing to accompany him, for everybody felt instinctively that, after the fighting at Turbaco and with Carex, it was perilous to visit other

de Teresa Piferrer, viuda, administrada por Thomas Piferrer, librero,
año 1751. Vendese en su casa, en la Plaza del Angel.

¹ "Persona de respeto en la comarca."

tribes. At last two youthful Spaniards offered their services. Caron set out with them to see a chief by the name of Bahaire at a place now known as Pasacaballos, where steamers going up the coast call at to take in wood. It stands just at the mouth of what is called a “caño”—that is, a narrow channel in a mangrove swamp upon a sandy flat. It cannot have been very different in those days, except that it was peopled by Bahaire's Indians, instead of negroes as at the present time.

Bahaire, evidently, was a man of a quick temper, though he intended to accept the peace that Caron offered him. He called a council, but, as the chronicler of those events informs us, “only for form's sake, to satisfy his people,” just as occurs, so says the ancient writer, in the like circumstances, even in Christian lands.¹ This may be so, though it makes lamentable reading for friends of progress and for optimists. At the great council of the tribe, Bahaire declared his views, saying that it was prudent to make peace with adversaries such as were the Spaniards, who with their horses and their firearms were irresistible.

All would have passed off quietly with the usual vote of confidence in the government, had not an opposition chieftain risen to speak. This patriot, whose name is not preserved by history for us, taunted Bahaire with his cowardice. He called him traitor, said he was afraid to face the enemy ; in fact, he made the opposition speech usual in parliaments.

¹ “Christian lands” seem to have changed but little, in their political morality, since the conquest of America.

Bahaire, who, as it would appear, but little understood the freedom of debate, or was restrained by parliamentary methods, raising his club, at one fell blow dashed out the speaker's brains. No one else rising to continue the debate, the vote was carried and peace agreed upon between this energetic parliamentary hand and the King of Castile.

Heredia himself, in a letter to the King,¹ says that he was anxious as to the fate of the two young Spaniards who had accompanied his ambassador. They happened to be Andaluces, and Heredia was rejoiced to find them safe. The treaty that he made with the vehement Bahaire brought him in, as he tells us, seventy thousand dollars, mostly in gold-dust and in precious stones.

The subsistence of the colony assured, and the treasury well filled, Heredia naturally set out to look for gold, after the fashion of the conquerors. He showed the Indians by ocular demonstration that it was to their interests to be friends with him, for if they hesitated, he burned their villages and killed a goodly number of them, as Castellanos, a contemporary historian (or chronicler), tells us with quiet satisfaction, as if their slaughter was an ordinary thing during those stirring times.

In Cipaguá, Heredia found a temple in which an idol was adored under the figure of a porcupine. This idol stirred his pious wrath exceedingly, for it was made of gold. He cast it down at once, holding it for another Dagon, as it would appear, and saying that he could not tolerate such bestiality.² This

¹ Philip II.

² "Que no podia consentir tan bestiales idolatrias."

bestial idol weighed five arrobas¹ and a half, as Castellanos tells us, and proved the largest ever found in New Granada, so that the faith of him who threw it down, was justified by weight. The priest of Tunja goes on to remark, "the hawk-bells, axes, and red caps the conqueror gave the cacique of the place consoled him for his idol."² This may have been so; but an idol of such size was poorly paid for by the small products of the industry of Spain the conqueror disbursed. Ideas of that sort never troubled conquerors, and so Heredia set out again, seeking for idols to destroy, and to implant the faith. After a five months' journey he returned to his new town, and entered it in triumph, bringing a million and a quarter ducats with him, and mostly all in gold. This tried iconoclast, after deducting the fifth part of his loot, which he sent to the King, being his share according to capitulations entered into before Heredia set out, at Seville, reserved a portion for the governor (himself), and after he had given largely to the hospital and paid his captains, still had enough to pay the soldiers in his troop six thousand ducats each.

So great a treasure did not fall to the lot either of Pizarro or Cortés, or else those conquerors were not so generous with their gold, as was Heredia. Honour and profit cannot be carried in one bag, the adage has it; but it would seem that faith and profit sometimes may go together, at least a portion of the way.

¹ The arroba was about twenty-five pounds.

² Juan de Castellanos was the parish priest of Tunja, a town in the Sabana of Bogotá. His "Elegias de Varones ilustres de Indias" was printed in Madrid in 1589.

CHAPTER V

IN about a year after its first foundation Cartagena began to take on the appearance of a capital. The frequent traffic between it and the Islands kept it in touch with Spain. Everyone who anchored in the bay was struck with its extent and its security from storms. Houses began to rise with great rapidity, built in the style of houses in the mother-country. In fact, many of the houses that still adorn the streets were built but little after the first conquest of the place. Merchants flocked to the new-built town, which soon became a centre both of commerce and of wealth. All the time it was growing, Heredia was being reinforced with men and horses from Santo Domingo and the other islands of the Caribbean Sea.

Castellanos, who, though a priest, seems to have been what in old times was called a wag, speaks of the ladies who came from Spain looking out for adventures. Some, as he says, followed their own sweet will, whilst others were a little more restrained by what he calls “ the ties of matrimony.”¹

It seems these feminine knights-errant always laid claim to relationship with greater families² than they

¹ “Maritales ligaduras.”

² “Una se puso Doña Berenguela, otra hizo llamarse Doña Sancha, de manera que de genealogía esa tomaba mas” (Castellanos, “Elegias de Varones ilustres de Indias”).

had any right to claim. This shows how well advised the Anglo-Saxons were to invent the peerage; it gave them scope, as a wit said, to show their best imagination in the art of literature, and put a bar to Doña Berenguelas and Doña Sanchas to pose as peeresses, either in Canada, New Zealand, or in Australia.

Heredia's next expedition was to the Sinú. Not that he knew he was going there, or even of its existence, for he tells us that as his expedition marched along, devoured by thirst, and hardly knowing what direction to pursue, sheltering themselves against the overwhelming heat in dry ravines and under scrubby trees, they chanced to meet two Indians who came out from a little hamlet that they passed. These men, a father and his son, talked with them, and one, perhaps in exchange for hawk-bells, or some other indication of the power and wealth of Spain, gave them a plate of gold.

When they asked where it came from they said from Finzenú.¹ The sight of gold, and the knowledge that more was to be obtained at no great distance off, always acted upon the Spaniards of the Middle Ages as a magnet does on iron filings. Nature changes but little in the course of centuries. The miserable search after riches that took place at the first conquest of

¹ Fray Francisco de Gómara, in his "Historia General de las Indias," says: "Zenu es río lugar y pesca, puerto grande y seguro"—that is, "Zenu is a river, a district, and a large, safe port." The port is that now called Cispata. He goes on to say there is much salt there, and good fishings on the coast. The Indians work silver well, and gild it with herbs that grow on that coast. The salt remains; but the few Indians that are left are sunk too low to work at anything except to make their bows and arrows and their spears.

America was repeated in South Africa, but twenty years ago. The only difference was that amongst the Spaniards many men of lofty character rose superior to the base race for wealth, and in South Africa all the scum drawn from the ghettos and the Stock Exchanges of Europe appear to have been vile.

The Indians whom they met guided them across the mountains, which, as Heredia says, though not extraordinarily high, are bad and rough for horses.¹ In this I certainly can bear him out, having had to lead my horse for several miles through virgin forests, over a mountain path, and with a temperature of a hundred degrees Fahrenheit. After the mountains had been passed the expedition came out on an extensive plain, and a short distance on came to an Indian town surrounded by a multitude of little tumuli.

This was the Indian cemetery of Finzenú, in which the Indians buried all their chiefs. Inside these graves, when they were opened, the Spaniards found an incredible quantity of gold. The place was ruled over by a chieftainess, who with her husband received the Spaniards hospitably. Heredia seems to have entirely lost his head when he heard of the buried treasure in the cemetery. Up to this time he certainly had not been cruel to the Indians, and he had shown himself most generous to all his followers. He sacked the town in which he had been hospitably entertained. That nothing should be wanting, in a temple in the town the Spaniards found some four and twenty idols, but not so bestial as the great idol that first excited

¹ "La sierra . . . no muy alta pero de tierra fragosa para los caballos."

Heredia's pious fury, for they were only cased in gold. A sad deception, which showed such a deceitful attitude of the infidel that Heredia was almost justified in what he did. However, as a compensation to these Christians ambulant, hung on some trees outside the temple were several bells of gold. These, one of the chroniclers of the expedition says, they also tore down and found the worth of them—together with the shabby idols, we may suppose—to total one hundred and fifty thousand crowns. Thus did Heredia pursue his missionary course, upon the one side laying up merit for himself by the destruction of false gods, and on the other accumulating wealth.

All might have gone on well with him had he not turned ungenerous to his soldiers. These men, each and all of whom were just as ardent in their faith as was their leader, and just as eager to amass wealth for themselves as he, held it as flat blasphemy that they should be defrauded of their gains. This was the sin against their Holy Ghost, a thing never to be condoned, and from that time a party rose that in the future threw him into prison and forced him in the long run to return to Spain to plead before the King, perishing miserably in a shipwreck on the way. For the meantime, however, all went well with him.

By an ingenious stratagem, after having buried three hundred thousand crowns that he took from the Indian tumuli, he got the expedition to move on farther into the undiscovered country, intending to send his slaves from Cartagena to dig the treasure up. It always seems amazing where the great quantities of gold found by the conquerors came from, not only in

Peru and Mexico, but by Heredia in the district of Sinú. In fact, so plentifully was gold found in the Indian cemeteries of the Sinú that it became a common saying, "It was an ill day for Peru when they discovered the Sinú." Either the gold had been accumulated by degrees during past centuries, or else the Indians knew of mines, whose secret perished with them. Certainly in no part of the whole continent has gold been found in quantities comparable to those found at the conquest by Heredia, Pizarro, or Cortés.

Padre Simon says that the Spaniards called the tumuli "mogotes," a word generally applied to hills of sand that run out on a beach.

Heredia's guide (the Indian who gave the little plate of gold) was the first to inform what wealth lay buried in the mogotes that were scattered about the plain for miles. The soldiers were unwilling to leave the place where for a week they had been opening tombs, some of them, according to Oviedo,¹ so rich as to produce fifteen to twenty thousand dollars each. However, partly by threats, and partly by persuading them that there was much more treasure to be found the farther they penetrated into the undiscovered territory, he got them to march on. The expedition that had left Cartagena, richly equipped and clothed, two hundred infantry in strength and fifty cavalry, was now much worn with fevers and with hardships, and looked just like a tribe of gipsies as they tramped onwards into the unknown, driving the baggage-mules and the horses of the cavalry in front of them, all loaded up with gold. A certain number of the men

¹ "Historia Natural de las Indias."

had died ; others had been killed in the continual skirmishes with the Indians. This did not damp the survivors in the least, for they, like all the Spaniards of the conquest, cared not a whit for dangers, heat, cold, or hunger, if there was gold in view.

After long days of painful wandering they came to what was known as the land of Zenufana, which seems to have been the borders of the province now called Antioquia, for they arrived at really high mountains, and there are none such in the district through which flows the Sinú. It was the season of the rains, that in Colombia are torrential, and the whole expedition, once engaged in the defiles of the high mountains, suffered most terribly from cold.

Most of the Indians that they had impressed to serve as carriers died of the change of climate, for they were all men born in one of the hottest districts of the world,¹ most likely were half-naked, and were sure to have been overworked. Little enough the conquerors cared about the death of Indians, but, unluckily, their guides were amongst those who perished of the cold. The Indians, who saw the plight the Spaniards were in, attacked them every minute of the day, and to complete the difficulties of the position the rivers rose behind them, cutting them off completely from the fertile lands of the Sinú.

Heredia, who was a born leader, seeing that force was out of place, entered into negotiations with the Indians, and prevailed on them to build him bridges over the river that barred his way upon his

¹ El Departamento de Bolívar.

retreat. How far he actually got towards Antioquia is difficult to say, but as he had been marching for a month he must have gone some way. Colonel Acosta¹ tells us that Heredia began to scale the mountains on March 24th. As he left Cartagena on January 8th, and passed a month opening the mogotes that he found at Finzenú, he must have employed the remainder of his time in his march towards the mountains. He could not have remained more than a few days in such a temperature or he would have lost most of his horses and his men.

The more the history of the conquest of America is studied—no matter whether in the tropic woods of Panamá, amongst the snows of the high mountains of Peru, in Chile or in Mexico, or in the expedition that Heredia led to the Sinú—the more extraordinary always must appear the courage and the tenacity of the Spaniards of the time. Although their arms were far superior to the arms the Indians had, and their horses gave them an immense advantage, yet their numbers were always small.

The guns they had, carried but little distance, and were slow to load, so that, unlike the modern openers-up of Africa, they could not slaughter their enemies with safety to themselves at long range, but frequently fought hand to hand with armies three times as numerous as theirs. The pity of it was, like other openers-up of darker continents, they came to invade the lands of other people who had never done them harm.

As always happens in an expedition that has got

¹ "Compendio Historico," etc.

into trouble, the Spaniards threw the blame upon the general. Being a general he ought to have produced rain or fine weather exactly as he pleased, smoothed out all difficulties, and foreseen everything.

Seeing the temper of his men, Heredia resolved to return to Cartagena with the best speed possible. After a painful march they arrived there, but so few in number, and so much wasted by hardships and disease, that they were scarcely recognizable. The death of about a third of the men who had set out was the gain of the survivors, for it left fewer to share the booty when it was counted out. After laying on one side the fifth part due to the King of Spain, Heredia had left four hundred thousand crowns; these he shared out amongst his men. As by the time that he returned his whole force numbered less than two hundred, the booty was immense. The poorest soldier had enough with which to return home to Spain and end his days in comfort and in ease. Few did so. The majority spent all their money upon fine clothes and arms, on horses that they sent for to the Islands,¹ in dissipation, and at the gambling table. Padre Simon relates that when the deputy whom Heredia had left in Cartagena heard the news of the riches of the mogotes of the Sinú, "taking his nose between his fingers he began to sing."²

¹ Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Jamaica.

² "Quedo tan alegre que tomendose las narices entre las manos, commenzo á cantar." Though I have seen an Arab singer in the town of Fez put his fingers in his ears before he broke into the high falsetto voice in which the Arabs of Morocco sing, the action of the deputy governor of Cartagena, I confess, is new to me. It may have some occult significance, not yet made plain to us.

Certainly, if wealth without having ventured anything to acquire it is food for joy, his curious singing was well justified. However, not content with this transient and Punch-like manifestation of his interior spiritual grace, he too determined to set out for the Sinú to open sepulchres.

In Heredia's absence Fray Tomas Toro, the first Bishop of Cartagena, had arrived. With him came Don Alonso de Heredia, the brother of Don Pedro, one of the conquerors of Guatemala. Heredia, with a disregard of policy that does him little credit, immediately appointed his brother his lieutenant-general, depriving Don Francisco César of the post. As César had served him faithfully since the first day they landed, was a brave soldier and a man of parts, to deprive him of his post just after a campaign looked like rank favouritism.

In general, Spanish commanders of these days, even when superseded justly and on the orders of the Kings of Spain, were wont to raise the standard of revolt. Both in the conquests of Peru and Mexico revolts of that kind took place that often put the newly-conquered territory in the greatest danger, and were the cause of much blood being shed.

Luckily for Heredia and for all concerned, and for the safety of the infant colony, Francisco César was a man of a very different stamp from the great part of his contemporaries. Few braver men or finer captains ever passed to the New World. Courage was general enough amongst the conquerors, and military skill not rare, as many of them had served in the Italian wars. Few showed much abnegation,

and few such probity and sense of discipline as César did after his unjust treatment by his general.

His deposition caused much ill feeling amongst the soldiery, but he himself accepted it without a murmur, and, when he was appointed by his chief to head another expedition to the Sinú, busied himself industriously to get all ready for the road. In August of the year 1534 he set out with about two hundred men, and in due course arrived at the Sinú. The rains which generally begin about that time in the province of Bolívar, and last two months or more, caught César and his men just as they arrived at the great cemetery. They could not work for the bad weather, and even had there been no rain nothing remained for them to work at, for the Indians during their absence had stripped the sepulchres and carried off the gold. Where they had hidden it no one was ever able to find out. Its resting-place remains a mystery, for it disappeared as absolutely as did the bulk of the treasures of the Incas of Peru. In the latter country Indians are said still to possess the secret of the Incas' treasure-houses, but, if it is so, the secret never was revealed to any member of the dominating race. In Peru and in the Sinú alone did the Spaniards ever come on Indian cemeteries that furnished quantities of gold.

Since the days of the conquest nothing further of the kind has been found in the Sinú. The very site of the Indian town of Finzenú has become a matter of some doubt, although the excavations made by the Spaniards ought not to be difficult to find. In Peru the opening up of huacas, as the Indian graves are

called, is still an industry, though finds of treasure are infrequent, the violated tombs yielding but little else than pottery and a few images. So little has been written¹ on the Indian cemetery of Finzenú, except what is to be found in the pages either of Piedrahita² or of Padre Simon, that the whole subject has fallen into oblivion, and hardly a Colombian in a hundred seems to have heard of them. The description of the Indian funeral rites and of the cemetery itself, preserved by Padre Simon, is interesting, and shows he was a man of keenest observation, and took deep interest in the antiquities of the newly conquered land.³

“The cemetery of Zenu,” he tells us, “was composed of an infinity of tumuli, some conical and some foursquare. When an Indian died they dug a grave, and in it with the corpse they put his arms and valuables, laying them on his left side—that is, the left side, looking to the east. All round the body were placed jars of chicha,⁴ maize in the cob,

¹ Nothing, as far as I have ever found.

² “Historia General de las Conquistas del Nuevo Reino de Granada.”

³ Most of the contemporary writers on the conquest were equally observant and interested in everything. Cortés, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, Pedro Cieza de Leon, and many others, have left minute descriptions of all they saw. One, whose name is lost and who figures as the “Unknown Conqueror” in the pages of Ramuzio’s “Voyages,” has left a drawing of the great teocalli (temple of Mexico). Dictionaries might be exhausted and academies toil vainly to produce a more tremendous name, than the “Unknown Conqueror.” His only literary compeer, is Death.

⁴ Chicha is a fermented beverage made from maize. In ancient times the maize was chewed by the old women of the tribe to macerate it. I believe this practice still is followed by the wilder tribes upon the Amazon and Paraguay. Advancing civilization, or

and a stone to grind it with, so that the warrior should have provisions for the road. If he was a great chief his wives and slaves were buried with him, having been first made drunk. The whole was covered over with a red earth that they brought from a place far away."

As the mourners remained drinking round the grave for days, and in the intervals of funereal drunkenness they piled more and more earth above the chief, the consequence of the deceased was estimated by the amount of drink consumed and the height of the mound.

In one of the chief sepulchres, known to the Spaniards as "La Tumba del Diablo," they found "images of every kind of animal, from man down to the ant,"¹ all of the purest gold. These objects Heredia valued at thirty thousand crowns. This "Devil's Tomb" must have resembled some of the museums of Rome and Naples, in which so many animals (including man) are to be found well imitated, but, alas! not in gold.

Piedrahita relates that Finzenú was ruled over by a chieftainess,² and that "her majesty was such³ that, when she lay down in her hamac, she placed her

degeneracy, or perhaps refinement (who shall judge the heart?), views this good old custom with disfavour, and the maize is pounded in a mortar in a mere bourgeois way. Chicha was drunk in Colombia, in Chile, and in Peru, and is drunk to-day in all these countries. Taken in excess, it induces semi-paralysis and idiocy.

¹ "Encontraron objetos de oro que eran imitaciones de figuras de toda especie de animales, desde el hombre hasta la hormiga."

² "Cacica."

³ "La majestad de ella era tal . . ."

hands upon two female slaves and used a third one as a footstool."

All of the spoilers of these Indian sepulchres are said by Padre Simon to have come to a bad end. "Impenetrable judgment of the Lord," he says. "All who violated these sepulchres that, though they were graves of idolaters, were yet sacred . . . died poor in hospitals, and the riches they amassed never passed to their sons."

It seems too good to be believed, and one is left hoping the simple, old priest was right in what he says.

CHAPTER VI

ALL the time that the various expeditions were exploring the Sinú and opening Indian graves for treasure the town of Cartagena steadily was being built. With great rapidity, the first thatched hovels—hurriedly run up to protect the earliest settlers from the tropic rains—were giving place to tile-roofed houses in the fashion of Old Spain. Solidly built mansions, with a patio in the middle, rose as by magic, for conquerors who had grown rich suddenly, wished to found families. Most of them called to mind they were of noble race, and if they were not it was all the same out in the Indies. Above nearly every door a massive coat of arms proclaims, even to-day, that the builders of the houses all were “sons of somebody.”¹

The usual Spanish plan was followed of grouping the chief buildings round a square right in the middle of the town. In the same square, built by the conquerors, stand the cathedral, the palace of the governor, the House of the Inquisition, and at one corner the first house built in Cartagena by a conqueror. From the chief square the streets radiated at right angles, for in few cities of the New World

¹ “Hijosdalgo”—*i.e.*, “hijos de algo” = sons of somebody.

are the dark, winding lanes of medieval European towns to be observed. Perhaps the knowledge or the intuition—for who shall say where the one ends and the other begins, either in individuals or societies?—that open spaces were a necessity in towns within the tropics, influenced them ; but it is certain that the chessboard was the pattern of nearly all Spanish towns built by the conquerors. It has remained so down to the present day in Spanish America. Despite it, Cartagena, which must have early taken on the aspect that it still has, is picturesque in the extreme. Whether the conquerors laid it out exactly as it is, is quite uncertain, although so many of its buildings date from the conquerors' time. The great walls, the finest in America, and the chief ornament, pride, and, as it were, achievement of the town, could not have been begun much before Philip II. was on the throne of Spain.

When Heredia returned from the last expedition to the Sinú, bringing with him two million dollars' worth of gold, great stores sprang up like mushrooms, and in them were to be seen silks, jewels, brocades, richly embossed saddles, and arms of every kind. In fact, as an old writer says, there was as much luxury to be found in Cartagena as in Madrid itself. So much, indeed, did Cartagena imitate Madrid that the duels of the “guapos”¹ and “valentones” of the

¹ “Guapo” literally = “handsome,” and by implication “brave.” The word is common in Spain, and has also survived from the time of the Spanish domination, in Naples. The guapo there has the same signification that it had in medieval Spain—*i.e.*, a “bravo.” In America it is never used in that sense. In the Argentine, when applied to a horse, it means “good for a long journey.”

capital were reproduced in the streets of the new city that was springing up beyond the seas. These nocturnal duellists or rufflers, so like our Mohawks, were always known as "men of the sword and cloak."¹

The climate of Cartagena, in which a man can hardly tolerate a shirt, made the cloak impossible, and thus these rufflers had to fight with their faces uncovered, and were not able, as they were in Madrid, to stab and brawl unknown. So great became their insolence that one night, as Heredia himself was walking in the front of his own house and talking to a friend, he was set upon by nine of these night-hawks. The experiences of his youth now stood him in good stead, for he made such a stout defence and was so well assisted by his friend that, after leaving several of their number stretched upon the ground, his assailants fled and left him master of the field.

Nocturnal brawls of a like nature were little to Heredia's mind, which was set on the exploration of the country and to amass more gold. His brother, Don Alonso, to soften down the slight done to Francisco César, made him his lieutenant, and sent him to a town, then called Balsillas,² to see a chief who ruled there who was friendly to their cause. The chief's name was Tolú, and when the Spaniards, under Alonso de Heredia, founded a town there, they called it Santiago de Tolú, naming it, as they often did

¹ "Gente de capa y espada."

² Balsillas=little rafts. The Indians of the place were great raft-builders.

in New Granada, after the Indian chief. In the same way Lorica, on the Sinú, was so named after the cacique whose residence it was.

Tolú proved a true friend to the Spaniards, giving them provisions in abundance, and also ten thousand castellanos¹ in pure gold—a goodly sum, taking into consideration the much greater value of money in those days.

Alonso de Heredia, though an experienced captain, seems from the first to have been jealous of his lieutenant, Francisco César. When César arrived in Tolú (then called Balsillas) he set the Indians at work to build a raft, in order to shorten the journey from that port to Cartagena, because the road, by land, lay across hills and marshes and through trackless everglades. This showed his foresight, for Tolú is only distant about forty miles from Cartagena, and is a port of call. Even to-day there is no road between the two ports: nothing but cattle-tracks serve to connect them. On the land side the way is arduous, with grass and water scarce. When Alonso de Heredia heard of the ten thousand castellanos that César had received from the chief Tolú, he called on him to give them up.

César had already shared them with his soldiers and was unable to comply. For this Alonso de Heredia tried him by court martial and sentenced him to death. His life was spared, for not a soldier in the host would act as headsman, and so Francisco César, the future conqueror of Antioquia, and far

¹ The castellano, according to Clemencin, was worth eleven dollars ("Compendio Geografico").

the finest of the conquerors of Tierra Firme, after Balboa, was forced to march with the expedition as a prisoner in chains.

Alonso de Heredia, after he left Tolú, must have marched right through the middle of the famous Llanos de Corozál, for he was striking at a venture towards the territory of a chief called Ayapél. This worthy also has given his name to the whole district. Castellanos says the Spaniards journeyed "á la ventura," for they had lost their guides, who had been killed in the attack upon a village. As the country in the Llanos de Corozál is cut by frequent patches of dense forest, that in those days must have been denser still if possible, and here and there has stony hills of not inconsiderable height, but rough and very bad for unshod horses on account of beds of gravel, their progress must have been both perilous and slow.

However, nothing ever daunted the conquistadores, and in such circumstances the men described by Padre Simon under the name of "baquianos"¹ must have been the salvation of the expedition in its worst difficulties. "The baquianos are those whose counsel is valuable (on such occasions). They find the way . . . they watch and never sleep. They suffer heat and cold and thirst and hunger . . . they go in front and discover ambuscades. They find and know such fruits as can be eaten. . . . It is they who make arms fit for the country, as bucklers, lances, and even

¹ The word "baquiano" is still used all over Spanish America in the sense of guide. In those days it more nearly equalled scout.

alpargates¹ for the troops. Accustomed as they are to savage warfare, neither the shouts, the drums, nor the screaming of the war-whistles affright them in an Indian attack. They do not feel the climate and are not subject to the boils and blains and the attacks of fever that afflict the bisoños and the chapetones, who, though they are brave fighters, are soon discouraged." Padre Simon probably meant soon discouraged by the rigours of a campaign in such a country and in so severe a climate as tropical Colombia.

The chief Ayapél was prepared for the coming of the Spaniards, for he knew what to expect of them. As they marched on, the soldiers in bad humour, for they expected that they would have found more Indian graves to open, they entered into a great cane-brake, extending several miles. Fortunately for them some of the baquianos who had gone forward on their horses descried the points of Indian lances appearing high above the canes. They just had time to gallop back and give the alarm when the Indians, seeing their ambush was discovered, charged with the yells and blowing of their war-whistles that gave the name "guazabara" to a similar attack.

Of course their efforts were in vain against the well-armed Spaniards, whose cavalry gave them a great advantage in all such Indian fights. They took some prisoners, who are described as "tall and handsome men." These prisoners told them that the town of Ayapél was quite deserted and that the chief had hidden

¹ In Spain the alpargata is a canvas shoe with hemp soles. In America it was of hide.

all his gold. However, the expedition found abundance of provisions. The thirst for gold still spurred them on, and as the Indians told them that none was to be found in the territory of Finzenú, and all the golden ornaments they had taken from the graves had been obtained from a land of high mountains, farther to the west, they set their faces once more towards the wilderness. In reading of their doings in Sinú, it seems strange that the Indians never raised a protest against the violation of the sepulchres. This has inclined some writers to hazard a conjecture that the graves were of a race superior in civilization to the dwellers in Sinú, and that that race had disappeared. It may have been so, but on the other hand, the Bachiller Enciso speaks of the Indians working in silver and gilding it with herbs. Gómara also talks of the Indians' silverwork¹ and says "they cast the metal and also parcel-gild it with certain herbs they use."

Heredia still pushed on, although his soldiers got more discontented day by day and difficulties increased. At last they reached a river, too wide and deep to cross. This was the River Cauca, that falls into the Magdalena, just above Magangué. For days they had been without provisions, except some bales of dried fish they found in a deserted Indian town. In no part of the Americas, except upon the prairies of the north, was game abundant, as it was in Africa, and so the expedition had to maintain itself with such wild fruits as they chanced to come across, and tops of palm-trees, cut down and roasted in the fire.

¹ "Gentil plateria de Indios."

They must have looked a veritable company of death as they straggled onwards, fainting from hunger, thin, and travel-worn. In reading of these expeditions of the conquerors of America, it is not to be forgotten that they did not know where they were going to, and thus their journeys had an element of mystery in them unattainable to-day. Even in voyages to the South Pole the explorers know that their goal lies in such or such a latitude; and, in the case of Africa, they are but filling up the waste spaces of a map, whose outlines are well known. No matter what the motives were that inspired the Spaniards of those days, whether the thirst for gold, a desire to spread their faith, or perhaps a mixture of the two, no one can cavil at their courage or their persistence in the face of difficulties.

Marching along the unknown river's banks, they came at last in front of a large island on which they saw a town. Starving, and without boats or canoes to cross the stream, the famished men plunged into the water and swam over to the place. Those who have seen the River Cauca, with its immense and turbid flood, its shallows full of alligators, electric eels, and stinging ray-fish, its waters full of ravenous caribés,¹ always ready to attack the swimmer, can but be astonished at the feat. What was their horror as they struggled to the bank to see the town burst into flames and the inhabitants make off in their canoes! Nothing remained for those who had crossed the stream, but to come back again as famished as when

¹ The caribé is a small ravenous fish about the size of a sprat. It goes in shoals.

they set out on their swim, for the inhabitants of the burnt town had carried off all food. Even the iron will of Don Pedro de Heredia was forced to yield to circumstances. He gave the order sadly to retrace their steps to Cartagena. By this time the discontent of the soldiery had risen to a pitch.

After seven or eight days of hunger and of continual fighting, Don Alonso de Heredia arrived at Ayapél, having lost a third of the expedition by the way. There he met Captain Cáceres, sent by his brother Don Pedro to his assistance. Unfortunately Cáceres arrived without provisions, so that all he did was to add to the misery of the rest. Don Pedro de Heredia, seeing neither his brother nor his captain had returned to Cartagena, came out himself to aid and rescue them. He arrived in time, for the soldiers, so he says, looked like a troop of living skeletons. As he had only just provisions for his men, his brother's expedition had to return towards Tolú. The Indians, seeing no other method of defence, had swept the lands of the Sinú quite bare of everything.

A serious mutiny broke out, but for a curious reason, the soldiers did not wish to leave the lands of the Sinú with empty hands after their sufferings. Weak and emaciated as they were, and threatened with starvation, they yet petitioned to remain and open graves to see if they could find gold. Heredia pacified them as best he could, and probably allowed such of them as were most unreasonable to remain where they were. A detachment, headed by Captain Cáceres, embarked in rafts, hoping to get to Cartagena before Heredia could arrive, and overturn his govern-

ment. Heredia, hearing of their project, immediately descended the Sinú in a canoe, and arrived two weeks before them at the town.

In all the histories of revolts in Mexico, in Chile, in Colombia, or Peru, at the time of the conquests, the mutineers never seem to have attempted to separate from Spain. All their endeavours, with the possible exception of the revolt of Hernandez de Giron in Peru, were against their governors. If the revolt succeeded, the triumphant general either went home to Spain or sent a confidential agent to the King, asking to be confirmed in the post that he had won. Spain was so far away, communications were so slow, and the Kings usually were so ill advised, that the request of the triumphant rebel was always granted. Thus did things move in an entirely vicious circle, and the King in a way was a participator in a plot against his own authority. Once only, in a matter of this kind, did a King of Spain behave with energy. This happened in the wars with the Pizarros, when the Licenciado de la Gasca was sent out to Peru to restore order and put the outbreak down. This he accomplished, though a churchman, and though he landed in Peru without a soldier at his back. All that he did he accomplished in the King's name by proclamation, and certainly he gave evidence of a strong will and great diplomatic power. As often happens with a man of peace, invested suddenly with military power, he stained his victory by his severity when he obtained the upper hand.

Don Pedro de Heredia found himself in a difficult position in Cartagena, even though he had got there

before his enemies and had upset their plans. His wealth was stored in the island of Codego, in Cartagena Bay, and, a revolt having occurred, he sailed there with his immediate followers and his slaves. Once there in safety, he was not the man to sit down quietly under such a serious affront. His prestige with the conquered Indians stood high. It is a curious fact that the same happened to Cortés and with the two Pizarros in Peru. Whenever a revolt broke out against either of them, their staunchest friends were always to be found amongst those very Indians who only a year or so before had been defeated by the leaders, to whom they rallied to assist.

Cartagena was in no position to resist such a force as Heredia disposed of, and so they sent a deputation, just as the Romans sent to Coriolanus, begging Heredia to spare them and the town. He, of course, spared them, after the fashion of most men in similar position, but the fright they had sustained was little calculated to make him popular. Discontent, deeply seated, bided its time against him. He was well aware of it, and understood if he could not go on leading his soldiers to victory and wealth, that he was certain to be lost. So he detached his brother, Don Alonso, to found a settlement in the territory of the chief Tolú. He himself, always energetic, always keen, both for adventure and for gold, set out upon an expedition to the province of Darien to seek for a supposititious *El Dorado*, at a place called Dabaybe, which was a sort of *ignis fatuus* to all the conquerors of Darien and Panamá.

During his absence his brother, Don Alonso, with a well-equipped expedition, retraced his steps to the Sinú. There he found the soldiers, who despite of hunger and disease had remained to open Indian graves, still hard at work. They had got so skilful at the work, they found it was only worth their while to open tumuli on the left side. Upon the right side no gold or ornaments were ever found. The quantity of tumuli was so enormous that opening them remained a profitable industry for many years to come.

Don Alonso, after providing these industrious ghouls with all the provisions he could spare, went on till he came to the River Catarrapa, which he followed to its mouth. On it he founded Santiago de Tolú, the oldest settlement in the department of Bolívar, after Cartagena, and at one time the capital. Here first were found the trees¹ from which the celebrated balsam of Tolú is taken, a medicine that still keeps its virtue in spite of fashion and of time. The Indians, after one hostile demonstration, soon submitted to his rule, for they were agriculturists, and had not that ferocious spirit of independence that characterized most of the wilder tribes throughout America. This spirit has survived down to the present day. A priest, in the wild regions of the new Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in Bolivia, only a year or two ago, took prisoner five Indians in a sort of Gospel raid.

Being agog to save their souls, which must inevitably have perished had they remained just as the Creator of the world called them into being, he tied

¹ *Myrospernum toluiferum*.

his captives up to posts. Then he expounded to them the dogmas of our faith, wrestling with Lucifer to snatch the wildlings from his claws. All was in vain, perhaps because he strove in Spanish, a language which they unfortunately had never learned. For days he preached and prayed without success. These infidels were so hard-hearted and so rooted in primeval villainy that they refused all food. Still he prayed on, until three of them inconsiderately died upon his hands. The other two he then let loose, and they at once returned into the woods, to lose their souls and live.

CHAPTER VII

DON ALONSO DE HEREDIA was one of the few conquerors who treated the Indians with humanity. Even his brother Don Pedro was not cruel. His chief fault was his love of wealth ; but on the whole the record of the two brothers stands high in the history of the times.

The Indians all about Tolú were the most civilized the Spaniards had found in their experience of the Sinú. They cultivated crops of maize, yams, and manioc, and from the first building of the town, peace seems to have reigned between the Spaniards and themselves. Certainly they have left their traces in the population of the district, for most of the inhabitants show a strong Indian type.

The town is excellently situated, just at the mouth of the River Catarrapa, and vessels of a moderate size can anchor in its considerable bay. Outside, the stormy Caribbean Sea, usually vexed and tossing, may rage its worst. Inside the point, a grove of coco-palms shuts out its waves and noise. A long ramshackle pier runs out some little way, and when the crank dugout canoe has put ashore its passengers, they stumble landwards on the crazy structure that seems coeval with the foundation of the town.

Padre Simon, generally an accurate observer, says the water of the place is singularly soft, and in this statement I can bear him out. Perhaps through lack of faith, in the same way that Bernal Diaz could not see Santiago, but in the battle only discerned Francisco de Morla on his white horse, I failed to find the wondrous springs that the good father talks about. "Near the town of Tolú," he says, "spring two wondrous fountains, close to the roots of a great tree, whose leaves on falling into their water are straight-way petrified. This spring is clear, and the water flowing from it pleasant to the taste of those who drink of it. The water of the second fountain gushes out, a deep blue colour, although at times it runs as white as milk. The water, like that of the twin spring, is very good to drink." These portents, and the groups of balsam-bearing trees, constitute the chief wonders of Tolú.

I saw the trees. My want of faith or lack of observation may have come in between me and the springs, in the same way as the presence of a misbeliever is often fatal to the materialization of Dante or of Julius Cæsar at aspiritualistic séance in the dark. I found the strange old Spanish town, the white sand, the surf-lashed beach, the whispering coco-palms, and the deep blue lagoon, sufficiently mysterious.

In the meantime Don Pedro de Heredia, with a well-equipped expedition of more than two hundred men on horseback and on foot, had set out towards Darien to find one of the numerous El Dorados, that always danced before the imagination of the

adventurers of those days, from Raleigh down to the meanest captain of them all. Don Pedro embarked his expedition in launches, and after sailing up the River Darien he disembarked on the right bank and struck into the woods.

From the first, bad fortune dogged his steps, and the adventure was the most unlucky he ever undertook. The country on the right bank of the Darien River has changed but little since those days. Swamp succeeds swamp, and inundated forests, almost impenetrable on foot, extend on every side. All round the Isthmus of Darien to the south, though it was the first part of America to be occupied, Nature has proved so powerful that she has maintained herself almost without a change. Only in the zone of the Panama Canal has she been bridled and subdued. Even there, were but the hand of man relaxed a year or two, all would fall back again.

Heredia committed an initial error in taking horses with him on the march. As they had been the greatest arm the Spaniards had against the Indians on other expeditions, so in this one they proved the greatest curse. Lost in the trackless, inundated forests, exposed to ceaseless rains, a prey to every kind of insect, and to vampire bats that sucked the incautious sleeper's blood, fanning him gently with their wings, so that he did not wake, until the morning found him weak and nerveless with the loss of blood, the luckless Spaniards struggled through the woods. Sometimes they had to halt a week to build a bridge to let the horses pass a caño,¹ and in the black and

¹ Backwater, running between woods.

viscid marshes men had to haul them through with ropes.

Since those days, most probably, no horse has ever entered into those dreadful swamps, and possibly will never do so in the history of the world. The best means of penetration might have been in canoes, for the Spaniards could not get through the inundated bush as did the Indians.

To all the protests of Heredia the Indian guides rejoined, "It is your fault and of your animals. We could have done the journey from the coast up to the hills in a few days." This probably was true, for the native Indian of Darien glides through the bushes like a snake. Silently he slips through the woods and leaves no trail behind.

After three months of fruitless toil and suffering Heredia gave the order to return. As the road that he had come by was now clear to some extent of wood, the journey only took him forty days. When he got back to San Sebastian de Urabá, from whence he started, he had lost all his horses and more than half of all his men. The disastrous expedition destroyed his popularity, and when he entered Cartagena the population closed their doors upon him.

Francisco César, who had remained in inactivity, now asked Heredia's leave to set out with another expedition to find the El Dorado his chief had failed to reach. Seven months he wandered in the wilds, failing to attain the El Dorado of their dreams, but crossing for the first time the mountains of Abibe, which for the past twenty years had been impassable

by any conqueror. Thus he discovered, though probably without his knowledge, what is now the province of Antioquia, one of the richest in the republic of Colombia to-day.

Although Francisco César set out as Heredia had done, from San Sebastian de Urabá, he followed quite a different road. Instead of involving himself amidst the forests and the swamps, he struck directly for the hills. Though by this choice of road he certainly avoided all the difficulties that had beset Heredia, he encountered others almost as formidable. So great were the obstacles he had to face, and so hard did the Indians fight against him, that when at last he emerged into the fertile valley of the Cauca he had lost a third part of his horses and his men. The valley of the Cauca is renowned in South America both for its beauty and fertility. Although at the time that he first penetrated to it, crossing the mountains that for twenty years had baffled all explorers, he probably but little estimated all its worth; to him belongs the honour of the discovery. No record of his name, as far as I know, is preserved in any place in Antioquia.

The most warlike of any of the Indian chiefs encountered since the foundation of Cartagena fought vigorously with César in the Cauca territory. This chief, called Nutibara, fell upon the little Spanish force, now reduced to about sixty men and ten or eleven horses, with two thousand of his followers. Never before had César been in such peril of his life as in the battle that ensued. As usual in the New

World, the horses gained them the victory.¹ Seeing that Nutibara's brother was the most active in rallying the foe, César spurred through the Indians, and after a keen fight despatched him. With his death the Indians became disheartened and retired. The chief Nutibara, like a good general, covered his followers' retreat, carrying off his brother's body in a hamac, and marching by its side. The Spaniards watched the sad, little procession winding through the woods till it was lost to sight. Not till it disappeared did they perceive that they had gained the day. As always happened in all battles when the Spaniards were hard pressed by the enemy, Santiago, mounted on his white horse, appeared to cheer them on. All things are possible to the interior vision, and, from the days of Constantine down to more recent times when angels fluttered in the sky over a host of Protestants, portents and signs have appeared to those who looked for them—upon the winning side.

After his victory, César collected all the gold he could and then returned to Cartagena with all speed. In the seven months that he had been away much had occurred at Cartagena. The unpopularity of the Heredias had grown with the ill success of their two last expeditions, and at the request of the inhabitants an officer had been sent from Spain to look into affairs. This man having died upon the journey in the island of Hispaniola, the Supreme Court of the

¹ Piedrahita says: "Son los caballos los nervios de la guerra con los naturales." The word "natural" would seem to be the original of our word "native," the use of which endears us so much to our coloured brethren in the Lord.

island—known as La Audiencia—commissioned one of its chief members, Pedro Vadillo, to go to Cartagena and institute what in the Spanish law of those days was called a “residencia” against Heredia.

The residencia was a general inquiry into the administration and affairs of a colonial governor under the laws of Spain. When in the colony abuses got too flagrant to be borne, an officer entitled either an “Oidor”¹ or a “Visitador” was sent out, with full powers to sift and to examine, and, if need be, to send the erring governor home. Naturally such powers led to great abuses when vested in dishonest officers. The first act of the taker of the residencia was always to confiscate the money of the governor under pretence of sending it back to the Treasury. As a general rule, the money never reached the government, but enriched the taker of the residencia for life. There were exceptions, as in the case of the Licenciado de la Gasca in Peru, but few and far between. The Oidor Vadillo was an ambitious man, active and energetic, and not withheld by any scruples; so he at once threw Pedro and Alonso de Heredia into prison, tortured their slaves till they confessed where the Heredias had concealed their money, confiscated it, and, not content with that, sent to the interior, and having seized upon some Indian chiefs, extracted a large sum from them in gold. This he sold in Hispaniola, and, after having taken on himself the power and functions of the governor, began to oppress and to illtreat the Indians.

The Heredias were confined in a damp prison

¹ Oidor = hearer.

underneath the level of the sea. Most probably the place where they were confined was an old building called "Las Bovedas," a noisome den, hot, damp, and situated on the beach. In it many of the best and finest patriots of Colombia have languished out their lives. Alonso de Heredia emerged from it crippled for life with rheumatism, for few resist it long.

Just at this moment Francisco César disembarked on his return from his long expedition, rich and acclaimed by all. Although his vessel anchored in the bay at midnight, he went at once to see his former chiefs, an action that does credit to the goodness of his heart, as both had treated him unjustly, and Don Alonso had loaded him with chains. One cannot but admire his magnanimity, on reading that he endeavoured to console Don Pedro with kind words, insisted that his chains should be knocked off, and, more than that, gave him half the gold that he had brought from the interior, well understanding that a man who has to plead before the courts in Spain pleads better if his purse is weighty and well filled.¹

Certainly César, who had been deeply wronged by both Heredias, showed that he was a man of magnanimity of character, and rose superior to revenge and jealousy, recognizing that his old chief, with all his faults, did not deserve the treatment meted out to him by the base, money-loving Oidor.

¹ The same, of course, applies to Japan, China, England, the United States, France, and the republic of Haiti.

The interesting career of Francisco César was now drawing to a close. Unable to remain in ease at Cartagena, he commanded another expedition to the interior, under the Oidor Vadillo, and after number less adventures died exhausted by his toils in a little Indian town called Cori, not far from the great river that still bears his name. Had he but had a wider theatre he would have equalled either Pizarro or Cortés. As it is, his character stands high amongst the ranks of the conquerors of the New World, both for his military skill, his courage, and above all, for magnanimity. On no occasion did he treat the conquered Indians with injustice, still less with cruelty. Such men were all too rare in those days amongst the Spaniards, though there were many honourable exceptions, a thing often forgotten by English historians, who seem to think all conquerors but our own, were steeped in villainy. Curiously enough, the name of César has been remembered in Colombia, only in a false quantity, repugnant to all ears attuned to Spanish prosody and sound. The river on whose banks he died still bears his name, distorted, and figures as “Cesár.”¹ The country round the river is still some of the wildest in Colombia, and tribes yet roam the woods upon its banks, half-naked, carrying bows and poisoned arrows. Some say that they are cannibals.

Francisco César’s grave is, I believe, unknown; but probably his soldiers buried him under some spreading bongo or ceiba, stamping the earth down hard and

¹ Instead of César. This is as if one were to pronounce London, Londón.

watering it well. Then perhaps they rode their horses backwards and forwards over it, so that the Indians should never find the place. This his followers did in the case of Hernando de Sotó;¹ but even then they were in doubt, and took his body up, and after placing it in a great hollow log they sunk it in the Mississippi that he was the first to navigate. A fitting grave for an explorer, either to lie beneath an unmarked ceiba, with its long bunches of purple flowers, or in a hollow log sunk in an unnavigated stream. Soto and Francisco César must, one would think, sleep better where they lie, than under marble in the damp-smelling side aisle of a church.

¹ The discoverer of the Mississippi.

CHAPTER VIII

IN 1541, probably with the assistance of the money so generously given him by Francisco César, Heredia was restored to favour at the Court of Spain and declared innocent of the charges brought against him in his government. So well had he succeeded in re-establishing his reputation that he once more returned to Cartagena, as the governor, with all his previous titles and powers confirmed. The inhabitants received him joyfully, and it must have been a proud day for him to return absolved and once more the governor of the city that he had founded and seen grow.

He found plenty to his hand to do, at once, for the inhabitants of the town of Mompox upon the Magdalena, founded by his brother, Don Alonso, had rebelled against their governor. Don Pedro fell upon them like a thunderbolt, hanged some of the chief rebels, and restored order in the energetic way that long campaigns against the Indians had taught him thoroughly. The leader of the movement, one Zapata, fled to the woods, and, though they searched for him for months, eluded their pursuit. Most probably he perished miserably, for in the woods around Mompox, even to-day, he who gets lost is a dead man.

Had but Heredia remained in Cartagena and attended to his government, all would have gone well with him. In spite of bickerings, certain to arise in a new-founded colony, the inhabitants respected and were proud of him. They had seen him, from the first foundation of the town, always alert and energetic, ever helpful, large-handed, and to no small degree large-minded, despite the love of gain that marred his character. Of his tried valour and his military skill there was no doubt in anybody's mind, and the fact that he had returned from Spain victorious over all his enemies gave him increased renown.

However, as the Spanish adage has it, "a man's face and character go with him to the grave."¹

Heredia was an example of the truth of it. The supposititious mines of El Dabaibe were, as a Colombian writer says, the El Dorado of the province of Cartagena,² as Manoa³ was the El Dorado of the interior. Heredia's first action, after the revolt was quelled, was to prepare another expedition to the same fatal place. No governor of those who were in power at the time of the conquest ever would consent to remain quietly in his government. Perhaps the exigencies of their position drove them onward, or popularity was only to be kept at the price of fresh conquests and of activity. Perhaps the

¹ "Genio y figura, hasta la sepultura."

² Now el departamento de Bolívar.

³ Manoa was the fabled city that led Sir Walter Raleigh to his ruin and death.

adventures they had already undergone made life seem valueless without excitement and without difficulties to overcome. Certain it is that all of them, to the last moment of their lives, dreamed of fresh conquests and new kingdoms to subdue. Cortés, past middle age,¹ engaged in the disastrous voyage to California, suffering and undergoing hardships that might have overwhelmed a younger man, with equanimity. Pedrarias Davila, the celebrated governor of Panamá, only took up his government in his old age, and never rested for an instant till he returned to Spain.

Don Pedro de Heredia was of the same breed of man. When he set out upon his second expedition to Dabaibe, he must have been sixty years of age, yet he set out as full of hope as if he had been young. Hardly had he begun to navigate the River Atrato in canoes than he fell into difficulties. Incessant rains had swollen the stream. The Indians harassed him, pouring in flights of poisoned arrows; and, last of all, his men were all attacked by fevers, and he lost many of them. The journey lasted several months, and once again, after his son had been severely wounded, he was forced to return to San Sebastian de Urabá.

When he arrived there he had to deal with one Robledo who in his absence had usurped his government. The rebellion settled and Robledo sent back to Spain to be dealt with by the courts, instead of

¹ Age never counted with the conquerors, and all of them died young in spirit and most of them active in body to the last. Witness Francisco de Pizarro, who, long past seventy, killed with his own hand three of the assassins who came to murder him.

returning straight to Cartagena, as he should have done, he set out for Antioquia. His men, after so long a period in the hottest of the tropics, suffered severely from the cold in the high mountains that lie between the provinces. Heredia himself seems to have been impervious to both heat and cold, to hunger, fevers, and to most of all the ills the flesh is heir to in countries such as Colombia, where climates vary from the greatest heat to the severest cold, after a few days' march.

When he arrived at length in Antioquia, after a month's journey, most of his men were ill. Troubles were always waiting for him, for he found the settlers hostile to him and partisans of the celebrated Sebastian de Belalcazar, whose government overlapped his own. Want of communications, the length of voyages, and the absence of good maps, contributed at the time of the conquest, and for long afterwards, to these overlapping governments. The territories were immense; and, when the different conquerors arrived in Spain to solicit confirmation of their rule in the region they had won, the Crown of Spain seems to have granted many of their claims without inquiring whether they were contested by some other governor.

In this particular instance neither Heredia nor Belalcazar seems to have acted in bad faith. Heredia had come up from Darien and Belalcazar from Peru. Probably neither of them knew the other claimed the government of Antioquia till their respective forces met. Heredia had sent out the greater portion of his men to explore the country, remaining himself in the

camp with all the invalids. A captain, one Don Juan Cabrera, whom Belalcazar had sent on with a strong force to occupy what he considered was his government, hearing of Heredia's position, surprised his camp and took him prisoner.

Not content with this, he let his soldiers plunder the camp and appropriate the horses, clothes, and arms and illtreat everybody. Heredia himself he sent under a guard to Popayán,¹ which was the seat of Belalcazar's government. As the Court of Appeal (Real Audiencia) had been established in Panamá for the last three years, Belalcazar sent Heredia there to justify himself. What happened is not recorded; but in a short time Heredia was at liberty again, as full of fight as ever. As soon as he arrived in Cartagena he set to work to fit out another expedition for Antioquia, for he still maintained it fell under his government. Most probably he had already heard of the great mineral wealth of Antioquia, and knew the Indian graves in the Sinú were all worked out and no hopes of a speedy fortune to be expected from them.

In 1544 "certain French corsairs,"² under the command of one Roberto Baal (surely an ominous name), after sacking Santa Marta, appeared off Cartagena, where, as Spain and France were not at

¹ Popayán is an old-fashioned town in the Andes, very full of churches and convents. Many of the best families of Colombia come from there. It is a remote place, and is only accessible on mule-back from Bogotá, a journey of ten days—provided there is no "novelty" (as the Spaniards say) on the journey. Novelty may take many forms, as floods, deep mud, landslips, or Indian attacks. Popayán has given rise to the excellent Colombian adage, "Todo el mundo es Popayán"—*i.e.*, "All the world is Popayán"—that is, the same.

² "Ciertos corsarios franceses."

war, nothing was known of what happened to the other town. The pirates, having landed at midnight, by daybreak were masters of the place. Don Antonio de Heredia, the governor's son, was wounded, and the bishop taken prisoner. After having sacked the town the corsairs still demanded ransom from the inhabitants who had not fled into the woods. To avoid more outrages and violence Don Pedro de Heredia came forward and sacrificed his entire fortune and all the treasure taken from the Indian graves. The pirates then made off, leaving Heredia totally ruined, after so many years of struggle, but as a recompense—one that no doubt a man of such tried valour and of so much public spirit could well appreciate—firmly enshrined, both as a hero and a benefactor, in the minds of everyone.

By a strange freak of fortune, this maladventure fell upon him on the day his daughter was to have married Captain Mosquera, one of the principal inhabitants. Even these blows of fortune did not damp his spirit, and he went on with preparations for a new venture into Antioquia to reassert his government. When he arrived there he found the inhabitants divided into two parties of about equal strength. His own adherents took the name of Carthaginians, and those of Belalcazar, the Peruvians.

After some months of political intrigue, diversified by an occasional appeal to arms, Heredia saw that nothing was to be made of the affair. Yielding for once to prudence, he returned to Cartagena, only to find himself confronted with another difficulty. For some time past the Emperor, Charles V., had been

disturbed by the reports presented to him by the great Las Casas and many other priests and bishops, as to the treatment of the Indians in America. At last he had drawn up by the great Council of the Realm the celebrated code of laws known as "The Laws of the Indies," confirming all the wise ordinances of his grandmother, Isabel the Catholic, calling upon the colonists to treat the Indians well, not to make slaves of them, and to convert them to the Catholic faith. This code of laws would have been the charter of freedom of the Indians had they been justly carried out. It is not difficult to divine how they were welcomed by the colonists, accustomed to treat all Indians as slaves.¹ In most places the laws were received with derision and treated as a dead letter. In others a sham obedience was given, and from that time the celebrated phrase, "I obey, but I do not comply"² became the watchword of colonial governors. For all that, the Laws of the Indies had a good effect, and now and then served to repress flagrant injustices. The code itself was liberal and far-seeing, and much the most humane of any system of colonial laws in force for centuries.

Had the provisions of the laws been carried out, the history of South America would have been far different. The Indians of to-day would have been ten times more numerous and as much civilized as the rest of the inhabitants.

¹ Englishmen will have the right to hurl a moral stone at the Spaniards of those times on the day when a white man is hanged for the murder of a "native" in any of their colonies.

² "Obedezco, pero no cumplo."

When Heredia arrived at Cartagena he found the Licenciado Miguel Diaz de Armendariz arrived from Spain to promulgate the new code of laws and to institute another residencia against him and his government. This residencia seems to have been without result, for Heredia continued in his post of governor, loved and esteemed by all.

It was not written that he should have a moment's peace, for a conspiracy broke out, known as the "Friars' revolt." A friar called Albis, "a turbulent and lewd" priest, as ran the phrase in those days, entered into a league with discontented soldiers from Peru to rise and kill the governor during a function in the church. The "sacred rogue" himself, who had to preach upon the day fixed for the revolt, arranged to give the signal from the pulpit. Heredia got wind of what was likely to occur, so when the friar mounted the pulpit he found the church was packed with soldiers, who at once arrested him. Several of his coadjutors paid for their villainy upon the scaffold. The friar himself pleaded the benefit of clergy. Heredia sent him back to Spain. In the Habana, Albis tried to escape by climbing down the cable of the anchor of the ship; but, falling off, was drowned.

Misfortunes never seem to have given Heredia any respite, for hardly had the rebellion of the friars been squashed than a great fire broke out that burned the city almost to the ground. Heredia, who in such moments never had a thought of self, flew with his slaves to try and save the church that from the first had been his pride.

After incredible exertions he had the flames extinguished, only on his return triumphant to find his own house burned to the ground and everything he had, consumed. Once more he set to work to rebuild the city he had founded in his youth. This time he refused to allow a single house of wood to be run up, but pledged his credit to the uttermost to the inhabitants, enabling them to borrow money to construct well-built and solid houses of stone, after the Spanish style.

A year went past, and all the time he laboured, sometimes working with his own hands, to reconstruct the town. His popularity was never greater. The people saw the aged founder of the town, now grey, but still erect and vigorous as when full thirty years ago he had ridden out upon his "valiant horse" for his first Indian fight, working both day and night assiduously, with admiration and respect. All might have yet been well, and Pedro de Heredia might have gone honoured to his grave in Cartagena, the city that he founded in his youth and strove for in old age. One day, however, without a warning a ship came into the bay bearing one Juan Maldonado, to take another residencia upon some old complaint forgotten long ago by those who made it, but pigeon-holed in Spain. All the inhabitants were indignant, and, rallying round their governor, refused permission to the Oidor to proceed against him.

Heredia himself determined once more to visit Spain, remembering his kind reception at the Court so many years ago. At Cartagena he embarked for the last time, reached the Habana after a stormy

passage, and re-embarked for Spain. Storms, similar to those that had pursued him all his life, whether by land or sea, kept him three months upon the voyage. At last, when close to Cadiz, a sudden tempest overwhelmed the ship, and sank her only a cable's length or two from land.

The crew all perished in the waves, and Heredia, left alive upon the wreck, swam strongly for the shore. Those standing on the beach thought him in safety, when a great billow dashed him on the rocks, washing his body out to sea.

His corpse was never found, and so he perished, as he lived, struggling with destiny. "It was notable," says Padre Simon, "the grief his death caused when the news reached Cartagena, for the affection that all held him in was great. They loved him as the founder of the city, and as the father of it, and for his character, for he was one who soon forgave his enemies, an almsgiver, and always strove to settle quarrels and smooth out troubles when it was possible."

No man can have a better epitaph. For thirty years he ruled the town that he had founded, in evil and in good repute, but always honourably. His life was typical of the best conquerors of America : always in action, still pushing onward to the unknown. His bones lie buried in the sea. No marble marks his resting-place ; but surely his spirit must still haunt Cartagena, the city of his dreams.

CHAPTER IX

THE heroic age of Cartagena may be said to have terminated with the death of Pedro de Heredia. The conquest of the coast country was now completed, and Federman, Quesada, and Belalcazar had pushed on to their wondrous meeting in the plains of Bogotá. The interior of the country had assumed much the same appearance that it still keeps, and all the most important towns were built. The River Magdalena had become the chief channel of communication with the interior, and has remained so down to the present day. The mountain passes through the Andes that lead to the great plains of Casanare, an extension of the Llanos of Venezuela, on which were bred the cattle and the horses that were the arms and support of the independence wars, had all been pretty well explored.

In the interior life began to be arranged after the Spanish fashion, but on a larger basis, and without the fear either of attacks from Barbary by the Moors, or from the fear of poverty within. As the whole Spanish race is democratic socially, distinctions amongst the white population were but slight. Nobility was in the main based upon purity of blood.

Twenty miles from the coast the negro population—then all slaves—ceased to prevail. Their place was taken by the Indians who, though politically free, were held in economic slavery by the system known as “peonage.”¹

The aristocracy of race and intellect collected in Bogotá, and in such remote and old-world towns as Pasto and Popayán. Business and energy were to be found, as they are to-day, principally on the coast, for there the people had the benefit of more frequent intercourse with Spain and with the outer world.

In the remote interior—for it is not to be forgotten that a journey to the capital, slowly ascending the River Magdalena in canoes or in the barges known as bongos, propelled by poles, took three or four weeks, and the trip might easily last a month—customs, beliefs, and modes of thought were crystallized. As the first conquerors had come from Spain, when the Catholic faith was, in addition to a creed, a bond of race and national unity against the Moors, it is but natural that the clergy had enormous power. The Indians had to conform by force, and outwardly at least were most devout, although there are not wanting those who say outward conformity did not exclude adherence to their older customs and the faith of their ancestors.

The coastal negroes seem to have been but little tinged with Voodooism or with Obi worship, creeds that they brought from Africa and still clung to in the islands of the Caribbean Sea. In Colombia

¹ This was, and still is in Mexico, a sort of aggravation of our own (now disused) truck system.

they all were Christians—that is to say, temperamental Christians, a blend of child and savage, so intermingled that you can never say with certainty which side is uppermost. In the small towns the merchants¹ formed the aristocracy. These may have been descended from good families in Spain, who left their native country at a time when trade was a degradation that no self-respecting person cared to engage in ; but once settled in Colombia their view was absolutely changed: Just as amongst the Arabs, where “merchant” (*tagir*) almost equals “gentleman,” so in Colombia the scions of the first families of Spain were not ashamed of trade.

Most of them, beside their stores, had cattle-farms, sugar-plantations, or some other industry ; but the best portion of their lives was passed within their stores. So it has continued, and nothing is commoner than to be served with sugar or with tea by a man who holds high military rank, but does not think he derogates at all from his position by weighing out his goods.

This state of society has produced the modern Colombian character, and rendered most Colombians high-spirited and imbued with national and racial pride, and at the same time progressive business men. As everyone considers that he is a gentleman, and generally is one in manners and in speech, society is truly democratic, for insolence and rudeness are most rare to meet in the republic from any class of man. All South Americans seem to know by intuition that democracy without good

¹ As in Scotland, in Colombia every shopkeeper is a merchant.

manners is impossible, and that rudeness in speech or insolence is a sure sign of social slavery. Throughout the continent, in all the varying republics, a South American, even though quite unlettered, is a gentleman—that is, a man who without servility can talk to any other human being on an equality. Votes, citizenship, reading and writing, knowledge of a profession or a trade, yet leave a man a boor, unless social equality between man and man makes men true citizens. Few people of the Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic races seem to take this in, and strive by self-assertion to supply what they do not possess. In the same way the painter, writer, sculptor, or composer, who sets out to be original, of set purpose, consciously, only attains vulgarity, or at the best that eccentricity that always marks the inferior mind; so does the man who wishes to be the equal of his fellows always remain on an inferior plane. In every case, by taking thought upon the matter, he only takes a cubit off his height. This is an error that no South American ever falls into. He never thinks about it and is exactly what he seems. No one need talk down, even to an ignorant man, in South America. In fact, it would be instantly resented, for all feel that every man knows more on some particular subject than his fellows, but that both still are men.

If he is ignorant of geography, he knows he is a better horseman than any European can aspire to be; but does not therefore think himself better than the European on that account, and fails

to see he is inferior in that he does not understand the mechanism of a motor-car.

In Colombia the national character was formed through many circumstances. When the fire of discovery and the search for gold at any price had died down a little, the settlers naturally turned to the great plains of the Sinú as fields for cattle-breeding. From the first the policy of the Spanish Government was to encourage cattle-breeding whenever possible. No doubt they felt that the feverish thirst for gold would soon expire, and that the population should be securely seated on the land.

In most respects their policy in regard to the Indies¹ was liberal and well conceived. Had it been carried out, the "Indies" of to-day would have been in a vastly different state. However, it was uniformly defeated by the colonists, who relied on the want of communications with the mother-country to disregard the laws, and did so with complete impunity. All sorts of privileges were given to settlers on the banks of the Sinú, in Cartagena, and throughout the province that to-day is called Bolívar, in which the Sinú acts as the Nile in Egypt, both as an artery and as a fertilizer. On December 8, 1535, the Queen, then in Madrid, received a petition from Alvar Torres, in the name of himself and several families and inhabitants of Cartagena, who had farms on the Sinú, praying for remission of the customs dues on goods from

¹ "Las Indias"—i.e., the Indies—always meant America to the Spaniards, hence the name Cartagena de Indias to distinguish it from Cartagena in Spain.

Spain for the space of seven years. It runs as follows :

“To the Queen. I, Alvar Torres, in the name of our families and other of the inhabitants of the province of Cartagena, wish to make known that whereas there is a scarcity of cattle, both in the province and the adjoining islands,¹ we suffer great necessity, and if there is not something done to help us the country will become depopulated. Therefore we humbly pray that for seven years we may be excused from paying all import duties of whatever kind.”

The petition was allowed and the permission signed: “I, the Queen.”² On the same date she signed a grant of five hundred ducats to the same petitioners to build a church in “which God shall be served and praised.”³

Also, on the same date, the Queen granted two hundred dollars of gold⁴ to one Pedro de Lerma, whose horse had been “killed in battle by the Indians, in the service of the Crown.” This shows a careful inquiry into detail that does Her Majesty great honour, and points to a different state of mentality from that prevailing in our own time, when the Crown would probably instantly recognize and pay a debt of a million, but refuse one of two hundred dollars as being quite outside its province. Still, the larger sum is made up dollar by dollar, and only the snobishness of the contemporary mind makes it refuse to take due notice of small sums. By this attention

¹ Jamaica, Cuba, Hispaniola, etc.

³ “... Dios sera servido e loado.”

² “Yo, la Reyna.”

⁴ “Pesos de oro.”

to small matters did the Crown of Spain attach its people to itself and make them feel that they were part and parcel of a great national whole. The Spanish character has its defects, in plenty, but nobbishness was never one of them. A certain homeliness pervades the fibre of most Spanish things—art, literature, and manners—and shows the people nearer to nature than are any northerners. This trait, of course, passes to their descendants in America.

As Cartagena gradually became important and the chief dépôt for the Plate ships, and known over the whole of South America for its wealth and luxury, so did the interior lapse into somnolency, until few provinces of the republic became so little known.

The towns were as a rule mere rows of huts thatched with palm leaves, irregularly grouped round the church, which usually was built of brick and stuccoed over and seemed quite disproportionately large for its surroundings. The richer cattle-farmers lived a semipatriarchal life on their haciendas or in their houses in Cartagena, visiting their farms occasionally. All dressed in white, and all thought little of a day of twenty leagues upon a pacing mule. All carried arms, though usually their guns were out of order and rust-eaten. Still, all the upper classes prided themselves upon their culture, and never fell into the state of ignorance that prevailed in other of the republics thirty or forty years ago. No country of the New World had so fierce and desperate a fight for independence as Venezuela and Colombia, then joined together into a single State.

In all the battles and the sieges Cartagena had its

share; but the plains of the Sinú lay far off from the seat of conflict, and the change of government from Spanish rule to the republic cannot have greatly influenced the national life. The province slumbered on, much as a sloth sleeps on a tree, until by slow degrees the influence of the United States drew it insensibly into the maelstrom of contemporary life.

CHAPTER X

THE district of the Sinú and the old-world city of Cartagena, once the most important of the Spanish possessions in New Granada,¹ of recent years are coming back into their old estate. Nothing can stop the port of Cartagena from becoming eventually the chief emporium of trade upon the coast. Its unrivalled harbour, sheltered from every wind; its healthy climate, compared with those of other cities in like latitude; its nearness to the Panama Canal; and the traditions it enshrines, will, when the railway system of the republic is a little more advanced, render it the glory of the land. Its rival, Barranquilla, has no harbour; ships have to unload their goods at Puerto Colombia,² thus adding greatly to their expense.

The plains of the Sinú are becoming known as cattle-breeding areas, and the cattle are steadily being improved in class. Thus with, say, three or four million head—a quantity that they could easily sustain—and one or two packing houses, a supply of meat would be available that hitherto has been untouched.

¹ Colombia.

² This port is not in reality a port at all, but merely a long pier. It is situated only two or three miles from the once well-known Sabanilla, now useless and silted up. From Puerto Colombia a railway some eighteen miles in length connects it with Barranquilla.

Therefore the future of Cartagena as the maritime capital of both the republic and the district of Sinú, seems to be well assured. The legends that have gathered round the city, its frequent sieges, its struggle in the revolutionary war of independence, its very name of "Cartagena of the Indies," always attracted me. Something there was about it that made it different from any other town in all America. Fallen from its proud estate I knew it was, and a mere shadow of its former glory of the days when the great silver-fleet used to assemble in the bay. Something there was attaching to it that seemed to bring it into touch with its unlucky founder, Pedro de Heredia, as it appeared to me; I often read the works of Padre Simon, and pondered on its fate, formerly so magnificent, and now, as the French poet has it, "a sad city, once queen of the oceans,"¹ uncrowned and sleeping between the white surf and the green palm-trees.

The war, that brought so many changes and sent so many people into countries that they had never thought to see, gave me the opportunity to visit Cartagena and the Sinú.

Those who had to cross the seas during the war are never likely to forget their voyages. On a cold January morning I found myself aboard the s.s. *Cavina*, going down channel in a storm of snow. All lights were out for fear of submarines and other German wonders of the deep. Few passengers on board, for none but those obliged to travel travelled in those days; an ice-cold ship; and the prospect of

¹ Jose Maria de Heredia. Sonnet, on "Cartagena de Indias."

the danger-zone in front of us—did not exactly make for high spirits or for mirth. We crossed the zone without misadventure, as quietly as if it had been the Channel in the piping times of peace. In those days it was supposed to extend about two hundred miles westward of Ireland—that is, two hundred more or less, for now and then ships were sunk farther out, as the ship's officers observed, to cheer us up. Then the patrol boats left us to our own devices, and we ploughed westward through the snow. Day followed day, and freezing nights succeeded one another. All our diversion, if it can fairly so be called, was to look out for raiders, for hardly had the danger-zone been passed than the wireless picked up messages of vessels sunk right on the course, and sometimes to the east or west of it.

So piercing was the cold and so monotonous the days, the snowstorm so continuous, that it seemed we had embarked upon an Arctic expedition. The great event was the arrival of the wireless news, telling about the varying fortunes of the war. As we drew nearer to America even that failed us, for the news from the American stations only spoke of baseball, telling how "Star-Pitcher Wilbur" had been re-engaged by the Tuxedo Club at a salary of fifteen thousand dollars. Interesting, of course, to "baseball fans," but rather of the nature of Dead Sea fruit to men anxious about the war.

When the weather cleared enough we went to gun-practice, but thriftily, for the Admiralty that maintained some twenty thousand "flappers" to muddle its accounts was mighty sparing of the

national treasury as far as merchant seamen were concerned, and doled out ammunition with as much parsimony as if the cartridge-cases had been made of gold.

Still, it was interesting to watch, and much more interesting to watch the demeanour of the crew and passengers. We cheered each hit, as if it had been a submarine, whilst a miss produced a feeling of disappointment, for everyone, though he said nothing, saw in the practice the image of a fight.

The captain standing on the bridge—a gallant figure, with his sunburnt face and keen sea-eyes, alert and vigorous—shouted his orders to the gunners: “Three thousand yards, four thousand, five thousand—fire!” and the gun whizzed the shot close to the tub put out as target, or plumped into it. We knew the skipper must have stood up on his bridge, strenuous and seamanlike, in the same attitude, shouting his orders, when the year before, almost in the same week, he sunk a submarine after a hot fight, somewhere in the Levant. The gunners, naval reserve men, were such good marksmen that we almost wished a submarine would show its periscope, for none of us had any doubts as to the result. None showed itself, and though we did not know it at the time the *Cavina*’s days were numbered on the sea.

Time passed so slowly and so uneventfully that the appearance of a tramp on the horizon brought everyone on deck. As we all knew the raiders were disguised, it was an anxious moment, till the captain, shutting his glasses with a snap, pronounced: “A Britisher!”

Officers and men on board had been torpedoed two, three, and four times, and we listened to their yarns just as a conscript listens to a seasoned soldier telling his experiences under fire, and wondered how we should behave when it was up to us. The yarns were far from reassuring, for the average sailor-man never allows a tale to suffer any deterioration in the telling if he can manage it. "You see," said one, "it was this way. Me and Bill and Jack and old George Southcote was 'angin' to a boat. Torpedoed? Why, yes, of course, or else why should we all have been a-'angin' to the boat? We wasn't bathing. Our ship, one of the Wilson Line, just stopped a torpedo right amidships, off the Fastnets. She sunk in 'alf an hour. That's why we was a-'angin' to the boat. And cold? Yes, as cold as 'ell or the South Shetlands. Bill says to me: 'Enery, I can't 'old on'; and I says: 'Can't ye?' and he drops off; that left the four of us. Old Southcote, 'e 'ad sailed all his life out of the Hartlepools, 'e drops off next. Jack goes the last. I says to 'im: 'Old on; don't leave a fellow all alone.' 'E says: 'No use, 'Enery'; and he drops off, and leaves me 'angin' to the boat, froze to the gizzard, in a Bull o' Barney of a sea. 'Ow it all 'appened I don't know, but I finds myself on board of a destroyer, a-goin' into Plymouth Sound. They says they found me lashed to the boat with a bit of sennit and my braces; but I never knowed. Anyhow, I turns in and 'as a sleep, and in the morning, after breakfast, borrows a rig-out from a sailor-man, a friend of mine, and goes ashore. There I takes the train right 'ome to Maiden Newton, and

next day I gets married. That was a year ago, and 'ere's a bit of baby's 'air I always carries in my pocket-book."

That was the kind of yarn that made one long to be torpedoed in cold weather, not altogether with a view to matrimony. The Newfoundland barquentine, ninety days out from San Francisco, that spoke to us, asking for the right latitude, for she was out of her reckoning, was a great incident. I see her now, and probably shall always see her, backing her fore- topsail as she hove-to a bit to signal us. Her lines were beautiful, her sails well cut and fitting as only vessels of her class ever appear to get their sails to fit, and she was bound to Heart's Content. How in her lengthy pilgrimage she had escaped the raiders and the submarines "only the Lord can say," the second officer remarked, adding reflectively, "but as He will not say, it does not matter if He knows." We dipped our flags, and she filled her fore- topsail and came up to her course again, and, I hope, reached Heart's Content, if it can be that such a place exists upon the earth.

We coaled in Hampton Roads, still in a blizzard, which took us down south of Cape Hatteras, without encountering the German raider that was said to be upon the coast. Spirits began to rise, the berths gave up their dead, and it appeared to even the most timid of us that the bitterness of German death had passed. Next morning the men washing decks were warming their frozen hands in the tepid Gulf Stream water, although the temperature was low. A dense sea-fog hung on the water making the Gulf Stream look like a landscape in the mountains of the moon,

fantastic, beautiful, and taking shapes like islands, promontories, and cliffs. Out of it might have appeared the *fata morgana*, though I am glad it did not do so, for so few ships were on the seas that the apparition must have been that of an enemy, somewhere hull down, but dangerously near. Jamaica in a day or two, the Palisados, Port Royal, and the Blue Mountains, as in "Tom Cringle's Log."

The passengers all went ashore and disappeared into the inky crowd that jostles one another on Kingston quays and streets. In the evening the *Cavina* cleared out for Port Limon. I watched her in the red and purple sunset sink by degrees into the Caribbean Sea, first her hull disappearing, and then her funnel and her spars. When she had vanished into the setting sun my friend and secretary, turning to me, said: "Well, good luck to her. I hope she gets home safe." It was not written so, and in a month or two news came that she was sunk. Vain was our gun-practice, and vain the fight she made. The first shot took away her rudder, the second smashed her gun, and she lay helpless. The skipper was the last man to leave her. No one who had ever seen him could have doubted it. No one was killed except one of the gunners who, so to speak, poor fellow, was indeed hoist with his own petard, as the dismantled gun fell on him. The passengers and the crew watched her sink slowly from the boats, a sight that must have seemed to them a sacrilege, though their own lives were in such jeopardy. They were all saved after four hours' drifting in the boats. Poor old *Cavina*!

On the dread day when the green, cruel sea gives up its wrecks, if she should still be fated to sail phantom oceans, I hope the powers that be, if powers of any kind survive, will see to it that she has better heating-apparatus in her, for ghosts are sure to be a chilly crew.

CHAPTER XI

THE poor old *Cavina* seemed to take away a portion of one's life, so much a ship eats into the vitals of the soul, even of passengers. The neglected island of the woods and streams¹ has always seemed to me a piece of Africa gone astray in the Caribbean Sea. The only European things I can discover in it—I speak but as a passer-by, and know there is a settled, well-established planter life in the interior—are the hideous houses of the new Kingston, and the stunted little thoroughbreds that draw the cabs. It is said there is no other horse in all the island, but the thoroughbred. In-breeding and the climate have stunted him in stature. He still remains a thoroughbred, with all the qualities and defects inherent to his caste.

The white race rules, of course, in Jamaica, but does not dominate. Now, man cares little for mere rule, one would suppose, if he cannot dominate; not by the knout, but by his moral force. This certainly he fails to do in the fair island that seems always in one fashion or another to have eluded us. Streets, lanes, and fields, the beach, the valleys, sides of streams where clusters of negro huts han glike wasps'

¹ "Xaimaica" was the Carib name of the island, and it is said to have signified "land of woods and streams."

nests from a bough of larch—they all are filled with negroes engaged in their chief function of continuous babbling. Though the men wear what they, I think, call “pants” and “vests,” and certainly straw hats and clean white shirts, the women, always more racial than the sex they rule, revel in their pink skirts under green blouses, and purple neck-handkerchiefs, an atavism of the “Long Ju-Ju,” that seems appropriate enough in the surroundings where they live. The general look of being at home in their own house is very striking amongst negroes in Jamaica. They may have once been slaves, although I doubt it, thinking that the alleged “masters” were most probably the slaves, in the same way the owner of a great country house in England is the servant of his servants and has to humour them to make them take their pay. Possession, philosophically viewed, is moral, not material. Although most of the property in Jamaica is vested in the whites, who make the laws and have imported their religion and their code of morals, the blacks have modified them all, insensibly. In the same way that the “mere Irish” altered the substance of all the Normans brought to Ireland, and carefully preserved the shadow, so have the black race in Jamaica insensibly fashioned the social aspect of the land, according to their taste. Whilst they look quite at home, the whites look mere exotics and mere foreigners. This in spite of the fact that Jamaica is one of our oldest colonies, won for us by that Lord Protector who revived the glories of our flag, but entailed the

now happily mitigated “British Sunday” on an ale-loving, once merry land. He it was who sent the first thoroughbred horses to the island, for Old Noll, though he upset his coach with the six Flemish mares at Hyde Park Corner, loved horses all his life.

The island might become a centre for horse-breeding, or certainly for that of mules. At the time of the conquest of Mexico, and generally of Tierra Firme, it sent out most of the horses that trampled the Indians underfoot to the satisfaction of Don Pedro de Heredia,¹ and no doubt of Cortés. Some of the horses and the mares whose colours, qualities, and fate Bernal Diaz has preserved for us in his great chronicle, perceiving that they too were “conquerors,” came, no doubt, from the plains round Spanish Town.² As the whole island lacks advancement, and certainly should be able to export at least two thousand mules a year, if the breeding of them were attended to, perhaps the Government might be induced to look into the matter, for the Jamaican mule is excellent. It lacks the size and weight of mules bred in Missouri and in Kansas, but it is a well-made, compact, and lively animal of about fourteen hands, active and serviceable. Its feet are good, and high, and very hard—remarkably so, even amongst a breed of animal renowned for standing work on stony roads. A little encouragement from the Home Government would do wonders in the island, but that encouragement never seems to come. The result is that the attention of the people is turned

¹ See note on p. 43.

² Then called Santiago de la Vega.

to the United States, where a market always is to be found for all the island can produce.

Tourists from New York descend in flocks upon Jamaica every winter, whilst those from England are few and far between. Little by little, as it appears to the casual observer, the island is being delivered over to the negro race. This may not be a bad thing, for after all they till the soil and do all the hard work, but when they begin to rise to administrative offices a serious problem will present itself to British statesmanship.

The island, a terrestrial paradise of lofty mountains, clear, crystal rivers, rich alluvial plains, and beaches fringed with coco-palms, only wants development to be once more one of the most flourishing of our Crown Colonies. Glasgow made it, or it made Glasgow, a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago, and there exists no reason, except the absolute neglect of it by every Government, why Kingston should not have a Glasgow Street, nearly as full of traffic as is Jamaica Street in the great city on the Clyde.

Even in Kingston, hideous and Board-of-Works looking as it is, there yet exist fine, old colonial houses that have escaped the ravages of earthquakes and of fires. Throughout the island are dotted here and there great country mansions, some of them dating from Cromwellian times, that serve to show the riches and the state in which the planters lived in the old days. They seem like pieces of old England gone astray amongst luxuriant vegetation, clear skies, and brilliant sun. They yet remain in testimony of a brighter time. They remind me of old houses in

South Carolina or in Georgia, states that have suffered as Jamaica suffered when slavery came to an end ; but in those states proprietors seem to have adapted themselves to the new conditions more readily than in the " Island of the Woods and Streams." The difficulty is the labour question, complicated by the undoubted fact that the black race is singularly averse from work.

All the roads and the lanes of the island are full of chattering negroes, merry and well-fed looking, going apparently to nowhere, to do nothing in particular. No land in all the world is better suited to the race. The earth laughs crops. The climate does not require warm fires or winter clothing, and so they chatter on, having grasped the fact that in increased production lies the future of finance.

In no part of the world do they appear more absolutely at home. Their religion, always a chief preoccupation of their race, they take even more jovially than their ancestors could have done on the coast of Africa. There at least there was the chief who made them work for him occasionally; the Ju-Ju man who terrified them with his gri-gris and his fetishes ; the fear of spirits that pervades the savage negro's life, like a black nightmare ; and the once present terror of the witch doctor with his accusations of mysterious crimes, and almost certain death by poison or by torture to everyone accused.

In Jamaica these all are absent. In the various sects in which the negro race is shammed, as Swift so jovially expresses it, the congregation pays the minister, and thus takes away from him the keys of

hell. As the gates of heaven are said to be cast open by the gift of Peter's pence, so are the gates of hell fast closed by the withholding of the pence. No one was ever easier to convert to Christianity than the negro. Animistic to the core, a god or two was but a welcome addition to the black Pantheon, in which Aphrodite was the chief divinity. The churches, Anglican and Roman, said but little to him ; the chapels claimed him as their own. In them he felt he was at home ; the fervent prayers—he likes to “sweat 'um Jesus”—and the bellowed hymns were far more to his taste. No man more fervent in belief, no man less actuated by mere works, than is our coloured brother in the Lord.

It is whispered darkly in the island, that the Voodoo cock sometimes is still slain at midnight, and that mysterious rites are held in secret, remote from observation of the whites. Who shall say whether this is true? They certainly exist, both in Haiti and in Santo Domingo, and perhaps in other islands. The phallic dance, the mento, the counterpart of the candomble of the negroes of Brazil, and the cumbiamba of Colombia, is danced quite openly, for negroes do not dance exclusively for exercise as people are alleged to dance here in this frigid isle.

Still, all the hard work of the island is done by the negro race. They dug the Panama Canal and made most of the railways of the Central Republics. Well treated, they work well, and it should never be forgotten that nothing can be done throughout Jamaica without their muscle and their brawn. Good wages and, above all, fair treatment are essential in all

dealings with them, and it should be remembered that the natural man is quite averse from work if he can live without it. This in the Island of Jamaica he can do quite easily, and thus to work at all is to confer a favour, a proposition that the negro understands thoroughly.

In such a natural garden of Eden as is Jamaica, the chief blots are the towns and villages. The larger towns are commonplace beyond belief, bad copies of poor originals at home. The villages, long straggling streets of negro huts, all built of wood looking like rows of empty match-boxes. Nature does all she can, embowering the meanest "shack" in masses of bright-coloured creepers, and shading miserable wooden living boxes under majestic trees that spring up, as if by magic, in a year or two.

Man, black and white alike, does little towards embellishment, though here and there fine villas are to be seen outside the towns, or old colonial houses in the country districts, surrounded by great trees. The negro village is an eyesore, a waste of ragged chickens, with but the coloured petticoats of the women hanging out to dry to give relief to it. One town in all the island stands out alone to show what towns should be in such surroundings. Right in the middle of the plain from which it takes its name stands Santiago de la Vega.¹ Its ancient name is that I like to think of when I recall the place to memory, although to-day it masquerades as Spanish Town. A straight, white, dusty road, that breaks off to the left at Constant Springs, leads out to it. Along it wander

¹ Vega=vale, or plain.

groups of negroes, all chattering, all merry-faced, and looking as if the primeval curse sat lightly on them. Others drive scraggy mules in carts, unpainted and uncleansed. After each cart a yellow dog or two plods on amongst the dust. You pass Tom Cringle's tree, a bongo or a ceiba, if I remember rightly, and in the distance the town comes into sight. You rub your eyes, not only to get the dust out of them, but because you are amazed. You scarcely note the groups of negresses that pass you, statues in ebony, with their inimitable walk, ivory teeth, bright-coloured clothes, their handkerchiefs about their heads, and air of Africa, for it appears a cinematograph has been at work, and you are looking at a town either in Mexico or Spain.

Here is no modern horror of cement-built phalansteries as in Kingston, no negro squalor as at Port Antonio or Anotto Bay. You pass at once into a stately Spanish plaza, surrounded by great trees. Little bricked paths lead to the sacramental garden in the middle, with its stone benches, flowers, and fountain, moss-stained and secular. Great clumps of crimson bougainvilleas fill the angles of the plaza, and the bright creeper known in Colombia as "la bellissima" climbs on the mouldering iron railings which surround the square. The sound of murmuring waters is always in the ear, as the bricked rills meander to the fountain, where swim goldfish, not blotched and unhealthy-looking as they are in colder climates but really golden, and deserving of the name.

One looks around, expecting that a Spanish girl in black mantilla will cross the square upon her way

to Mass, followed by an attendant negro woman. She does not pass. Nor does a ragged gentleman ask alms with the air of doing you a favour, nor on the benches does there sit a group of politicians, railing at the Government and anxious to avail themselves of any little post that it may throw to them. No Spanish soldier, smart, clean, and olive-coloured, in his suit of snowy drill, saunters across the plaza (for it is really a plaza, not a square) rolling a cigarette. No priest reading his breviary strolls beneath the trees, or friar with his bare feet and well-lined belly hurries back to his convent, not to miss Mass or meat.

None of these types are to be seen ; not the lithe bull-fighter, swaying upon his hips just as a Spanish dancer sways and undulates, nor yet the stout and shawl-wrapped women with their unstable busts all innocent of stays.

Somehow one feels that they still haunt the plaza, where they walked a thousand times in days forgotten and long past. Surely their images are photographed upon the stones and benches, for nature prodigal of life, of vegetation, and of all she makes and casts away without a thought, must preserve shadows, for after all they are the most enduring part of man. Spain, or its shadow, still lives in the plaza ; but all around is Georgian England, homely and picturesque, looking as if a country town in Sussex had been transplanted and had taken root, flourished, and died, and remained petrified.

The parish church, with due, squat spire on which St. Peter's cock swings about languidly as if it felt the heat, brick-built and savouring of the days when

churches were a sort of cross between a barrack and a windmill, fills one angle of the square. A slate-flagged path leads up to it, and when you enter into its sacred precincts, the familiar, mouldy smell, preserved, no doubt, just as miraculously as the orders of the bishops who rule over it, assaults your nostrils, bringing back any parish church in Sussex or in Kent.

Worthies in full-bottomed wigs, all wrought in marble or in alabaster, lie under mighty Georgian catafalques, awaiting the last trump that chubby angels perched on the cornices like swallows perched upon a rail, seem eager to blare out. Their virtues and their services to the island are couched in Latin, rather bovine than canine; yet they sleep on, as undisturbed by sermons or by hymns as they would sleep in a dark corner next to the yew-tree under the lush grass of a churchyard in the old country, with an intruding nonconformist pony grazing above their heads. The groups of Georgian buildings and Rodney's monument under its cupola give an air of Kensington or Kew, gone astray in the tropics. They do not make too jarring a discord with the old Spanish plaza and its tall rustling trees.

All seems to blend together into an harmonious whole. Even the negroes seem to walk more warily in the decaying streets, and the mulata girls put on a foreign air as they go chattering about the lanes. Possibly reformers have marked down Spanish Town, as the cockney "big-game" shooter, with his "shooting licence," marks down a giraffe for destruction in East Africa.

In the meantime it slumbers peacefully, a relic

of the days when planters, sitting down to dinner at three o'clock, sat on till midnight, eating pork chops and good corned beef, washed down with port and rum. Long may it slumber, and soon may the other towns wake up; for they need progress and the vivifying breath of trade: but Santiago de la Vega, with Toledo, Granada, Fez, and other relics of the past, should be preserved intact for us to wander in and meditate, when our heads ache with the rude shouting of the votaries of 10 per cent. bowing before their god.

A delightful island with its high mountains and its fertile vales, its tropic forests, and its memories of the past: its Spanish names preserved distorted in their Anglo-Saxon aspect, Wagwater for "Agua Alta" and "Boca de Agua" turned into Bogwalk. An island of great capabilities, a sort of Hamlet of the West Indies, lacking advancements, poor in the midst of natural riches, ready to fall into the hands of the United States, unless we, like the Devil, "tak' a thocht," and mend our ways.

CHAPTER XII

THE fruit-boat steamed past all that now remains of the once famous harbour of Port Royal, with all its memories of Nelson and the buccaneers. It dropped the Palisados, leaving them a long, brown line that melted in a moment into nothingness, only the shoals remaining, white and angry, until they too were lost. Kingston, with its long, new phalansteries, and wooden houses with their high brick steps before the doors, was blended with the flowering trees and shrubs into an harmonious haze of purple and of red. The plain of Liguanea, its hospitable club-house, shaded by clumps of star apples and papaws, and fringe of sturdy *lignum-vitæ* trees with their dark purple flowers, the racecourse, and the bright green lanes, vanished into the past that has swallowed up so many pleasant memories of happy days.

Lastly, the Blue Mountains slowly began to sink. Newcastle, with its white houses clustering on the hillside, its tropic forests, and its palms, melted reluctantly into the atmosphere. Then, the tall peaks, diaphanous and blue, hung for an instant in the sky, looking like reversed atolls. They too disappeared, and then we set our course to Cartagena of the Indies, across the Caribbean Sea, choppy and wind-

curled as when the first of the old mariners entered its humours in their logs. Gradually the sea grew calmer and more tropical, the shoals of flying fish more frequent, and then a long, low line of coast appeared, fringed with a growth of coco-palms. The warm air of the tropics floated out, until at last even the Caribbean Sea was stilled by it, and lay out calm and blue, with the reflection of a few white clouds seeming to float upon the surface, as water-lilies float upon the surface of a pond. Islands appeared to rise out of the sea to meet the ship, and, as she hastened past them, the huts and hamlets buried in the trees impressed you with an air of comfort and content, probably quite illusory in fact.

Most harbours and most towns, upon whatever coast they lie, are visible a long way off; but when a vessel coming from Jamaica to Cartagena makes its landfall, a city seems to rise out of the waves. Cadiz, the Silver Cup,¹ and Mogador, called Sueira—that is the Picture—by the Moors, alone can rival it. Both of them emerge as if a coral reef had suddenly been raised out of the depths, and both of them look sea-born and ethereal, seen from a vessel's deck. They spring out, as it were, suddenly, as if the coral insects working upwards, had finished only the night before, so white the houses and so dazzling the walls. The tropic haze only allows the unconquered city,² Cartagena, and its outworks to become visible, as it were, through a veil of gauze.

As you stand watching the low coast, fringed

¹ "La taza de plata."

² "La ciudad invicta."

with its palms and ringed about with surf, on the left hand a block of masonry appears out of the sea. It takes the shape of an old Spanish fort. The crenellated walls have mouldered, the battlements have fallen, in places, on the sand. No more the blood and orange standard with its castles and its lions flaps in the light air ; but the flat parapets, the deep embrasures, through which the noses of the brass carronades still peep, the massive iron-studded doors, the counterscarps, the mamelons and ravelins, the machicoulis and round pepper-boxes in which the sentinels dressed in their buff coats, their morrions on their heads, their halberts in their hand, stood sentinel in vain against El Draque and of Pointis—all speak of Spain. Gone is her glory, and gone the glory of the fort—that is, its military glory has departed ; but as a feature in the landscape it still holds its place. The lofty water-gate, the central tower, and the long flanking walls, shelter but a trading schooner, white and yacht-like, with her tall, tapering masts and bulwarks with their sheer, recalling slavers of the past, and a few crank canoes.

The dense, metallic-looking vegetation surges up behind the ruinous Castillo de San Fernando, just as the ocean surges up to kiss it on the seaward side. A grass-thatched lean-to shelters the guardian and his family, and a small garden overgrown with weeds is part of the parade ground where the Spanish soldiers paced about in times gone by, listening to the long-drawn-out cry of “Centinela alerta-a-a,” from the pepper-boxes.

Sic transit—that is, if anything ever really changes,

and if a phantom guard does not still listen to a phantom sentinel, so deep the roots that Spain struck down into the heart of the New World.

Opposite to the Castillo de San Fernando the Castillo de San José frowns ruinously upon the strip of calm, blue sea between their walls. Upon it the same air of neglect has cast a shroud (perhaps a veil), and great, green patches on the stonework look like designs drawn by that king of decorators, Time. Bright flowering creepers twine themselves about the embrasures, and a canoe or two rock, with the round bullet head of a negro propped against the gunwale as he sleeps, balancing himself instinctively, just as a frigate bird is said to sleep upon the wing.

As the vessel at half-speed makes her way through the oily waters, where the "shark pursues the mackerel,"¹ and schooners lie becalmed, their sails flapping against the mast, suddenly a city rises from the waves.

A mass of domes and towers, of houses painted pink, with brown-tiled roofs, gleam in the sun. A golden haze softens and blends them into a picture; showing no outline, melting into the atmosphere, intangible and looking like the mirage of a town, seen in a dream. The floating city is ringed round with a vast, brown wall, turreted here and there with towers, broken by bastions and by counterscarps. Great gates yawn here and there in which portcullises are ready, or were ready till time devoured them, to drop upon the foe. All the medieval art of fortification

¹ "Le requin poursuit en paix les scombres": Sonnet, on "Cartagena de Indias," Heredia.

seems to have been exhausted, as if some Vauban of those days had wrought his masterpiece and then retired, knowing his work impregnable if hearts were stout enough behind its walls. Palms and more palms fringe all the shores; castle succeeds to castle, El Pastelillo, El Manzanillo, and finally San Lazaro upon its isolated rock, now ruinous, and a mere playground for lizards and for snakes.

Beyond it rises the hill known as La Popa, from its resemblance to the stern of a galleon. A convent crowns it, once tenanted by Discalced Augustinians, and still under the patronage of Nuestra Señora de la Popa.¹ The Augustinians have long departed; but the advocation of Our Lady of the Popa still remains, although the convent with its massive walls and deep, sunk well is ruinous, tenanted by day by humming-birds and at night by armadillos and by bats. Pointis and Drake, to show their patriotism or their faith, both held it to ransom, and to-day a sea of tropic vegetation flows up, threatening to engulf its walls.

The rocky road that leads to it is a stiff pull in such a climate, but once beneath the ægis of Our Lady at the top, the view repays the effort more than a hundredfold. The harbour with its mouths lies out beneath one's feet. The castles still keep their illusory watch at La Boca Chica, and farther off El Castillo Grande stands on guard over the forgotten glory of medieval Spain. So clear the air is that you can see the flying-fish rise, fluttering like a shower of emeralds, and disappear into the waves, scarcely as large as minnows, seen thus from afar. Canoes

¹ "Con la advocacion de Nuestra Señora de la Popa."

with their white sails drift along lazily, the trees upon the surf-kissed beaches rustle in the breeze, looking like gigantic, ostrich feathers growing from the sand. From the vessel's deck, as she advances up the bay, La Popa seems to shut the world out. Only the faint blue line of the hills above Turbaco to the south, take away the illusion of a town set on an island, in its dark blue lagoon.

As you draw near the shore, the cathedral dome seems to detach itself from the sea of rose-pink houses, and the towers of La Merced, Santo Tomas, and La Trinidad stand up like lighthouses above the massive walls and the compacted houses of the town.

The vessels anchored in the port lie blistering in the sun; no sound breaks on the ear; the very waters seem asleep and quite unstirred, except when now and then a shark's triangular back-fin cuts them like a black wedge, and then sinks down into the oily depths. No one would feel surprised if there were still galleons at anchor, or if the captain of the port were to come off dressed in trunk-hose and cloak, his rapier riding on his thigh.

What is surprising is the arrival at the modern wharf of La Machina, with its corrugated-iron roof, its derricks, and the appliances of commerce that have rendered all the world great, prosperous, and most uncomely to the eye. 'Tis true, the movement of the wharf is not excessive, and the perspiring negro labourers often relax their toil to mop their faces and to light their cigarettes. All dress in white, all wear straw hats, and all chatter as negroes chatter all the world over, ceaselessly, though at La Machina their

voices are less harsh than in Jamaica, and the lisping dialect that they speak is not unpleasant to the ear.

A blend of Andaluz and of Mandingo, with all the terminations of the words left out, or "eaten" as the Spaniards say, the Costeño¹ dialect is very difficult to catch for Castilians, who rattle out their consonants as sharply as hail falling on a window-pane. A little railway, running two or three miles through scrub, leads to the town, passing close to the harbour, with the walls, the churches, and the town seen just across the bay. It finishes at a great railway-station, fit for the terminus of a great line, but built in the middle of a waste, sun-swept and arid, in which the little negro boys play baseball, regardless of the heat. The public gardens, with their usual stucco seats seen everywhere in South America, and the great modern market with its iron roof, are on the left hand of the square. The Martyrs' Monument rises hard by, to mark the place where patriots were shot down by other patriots. O Liberty, thou bloodstained goddess, as I once heard an orator in one of the republics say, what crimes have been committed in thy name!² Certain it is that the same goddess usually eats her children, and perhaps counts as many victims in her cause as Mumbo-Jumbo or as Jugger-naut, or any other of the causes or the faiths for which men persecute and slay.

A modern gateway with a clock, the space cut out of the Cyclopean-looking walls, is the chief

¹ "Un costeño" is a man from the coast—black, white, or Indian.

² I doubt if he had ever heard of Madame Roland. The phrase probably sprang from personal experience.

entrance to the unconquered city, as its inhabitants delight to call it.

Once passed beneath it, and after having crossed the little square, known as La Plaza de los Coches, in which stand dozens of open vehicles, each drawn by a slight, well-bred horse, that looks a little like an Arab, long, sandy streets lead off on every side. Some, it is true, are paved for a short distance, but all relapse into their native sand until they "die," as the Spanish phrase goes, either at the seashore or passing by other apertures cut in the walls come out on the great waste where stands the railway-station.

Surely few cities in the world can equal Cartagena for its beauty, its quietness, its air of fallen greatness, and for the silence of the streets. The rose-pink houses with their deep eaves and overhanging balconies, the massive doors studded with iron nails, and grated windows, give a look of Seville; but a sad Seville, without the air of joyousness and paganism that stamps the city, under the patronage of the saints Justa and Rufina, and whose emblem is the Knot.¹

In no place in the New World has Spain impressed herself more strongly, with the exception perhaps of Mexico, than in this city on the sand. The massive crests above the doors show that the first conquerors were hidalgos, and the vast moulderings houses speak of the time when the saying, "I am glad of it, as said the governor of Cartagena," became proverbial in the Spanish tongue. The streets were narrow, and it

¹ The Knot was given to Seville by Alonso el Fabio, son of St. Ferdinand, as its emblem. It is supposed to be the *Nostus Herculis* of the Phœnicians, who used it as a mark for their bales of merchandise to signify they were of full weight.

appears to have been the custom of those days for gallants to tie their horses to the gratings of the windows, as they stood courting the ladies penned behind them in the medieval Spanish style.

This in the narrow streets blocked up the traffic, for Cartagena was in those days a busy mart crammed full of soldiers fitting out expeditions to discover gold mines, to conquer empires, and to extend the power and might of Spain. Slaves thronged the streets, negroes but just arrived from Africa, bozales—that is, muzzled, for they could speak no Christian—or Indians taken with the blunderbuss and lance.

The governor—unluckily fame, ever careless of its greatest sons, has not preserved his name—was a reforming spirit. He straight wrote out an edict, and had it promulgated. “Horses,” he said, “found tied to balconies, shall all be hamstrung by my body-guard. Read this and mark it well, ye citizens of Cartagena.” The citizens, accustomed to high-sounding phrases and to ukases that never were enforced, obeyed but did not think about complying.¹ They tied their horses, as they had always done, to the gratings of the windows, for gentlemen of their calibre could not go afoot, and an impatient, unnecessary page would have been an uncomfortable adjunct to their love-making.

At last upon a day the governor held a reception, and all the “flower and cream”² of Cartagena were

¹ “Obedezco, pero no cumplo”—*i.e.*, “I obey, but do not comply”—was the set phrase used by Spanish governors in the Indies when either an absurd order or one enjoining them to put down the enslavement of the Indians arrived from Madrid.

² “Flor y nata.”

bidden to attend. This was the chance the halberdiers had waited for to prove their vigilance. The governor was seated at the receipt of fashion and of rank, exchanging compliments with grave and reverend though perhaps addle-pated counsellors, and with an eye, we may suppose, upon the ladies, for even governors are men.

A page approached him and whispered, "Sir, the halberdiers have just come on two horses tied to a window-grating and have hamstrung them both." The governor, pleased that his foolish edict had been carried out, exclaimed, "I am glad of it," and the page withdrew. He had hardly reached the door than another, rushing in, desired to speak instantly with the governor. "Sir," he said, as he twisted round his hat, "the soldiers have indeed hamstrung two fine horses tied to the window-bars." "What of that," said the governor, "the edict has been complied with and the halberdiers did well." The page replied, "That is so, sir; but the two horses were your own." The governor, making, as one supposes, a rabbit's laugh,¹ said, "I'm glad of it," and hence the saying, "I am glad of it, as said the governor of Cartagena," passed into a phrase.

¹ "La risa del conejo." The phrase corresponds to "laugh on the wrong side of the mouth."

CHAPTER XIII

THE silent city strikes an air as of monasticism. Long stretches of brown walls, with the minutest windows looking out upon the world, speak of the time when the streets of Cartagena were filled with friars, for friars in every age seem to have passed their time, everywhere but at home. The convents are but shells, for now the friars have gone to other worlds, none of which can be hotter than the old town itself. Though they are gone, their influence remains, as it were, in the air, and certainly in the hearts of the population, for Cartagena is a stronghold of Catholicism. The sandy streets, the population in its snow-white clothes, the slender traffic, and the soft and balmy atmosphere, make up a picture almost unique in South America to-day.

The high Andean cities, Bogotá, La Paz, and Quito, certainly are restful enough in their remoteness from the world. Still, their harsh climates and the necessity to wear thick clothes and move about, if only to keep warm, destroy much of the air that their old Spanish houses, massive walls, and churches springing up in unsuspected corners, gives them at first sight. Up in the Andes the people huddle wrapped up in blankets, as in the plateaux of Castile,

and "take the sun" at the corners of the squares. In Cartagena the sun is looked on as an enemy. Everyone seeks the shady corners of the streets. Thus you may say that the Andean cities represent Castile, whilst Cartagena stands for Naples or for Seville, with all the acuteness of the wits of Southern Europe and a far greater energy of body and of mind. The churches and the empty convents speak of medieval Spain, and yet you feel that the population is alive and businesslike according to its lights.

Once a stronghold of clericalism, the city, although still strongly Catholic, is slowly getting free from the bonds of bigotry that still bind Bogotá and Popayán, Pasto, and the towns of the interior. The fine cathedral built on the site of the first church Heredia founded, with its high tower that stands up like a lighthouse, just as a mosque tower stands up in the East above the sea of flat-roofed houses that the Moors took to Spain and the Spaniards transplanted to America, has something bare about it, as if the familiar air of churches in the Old World could not survive the transplantation to another hemisphere.

No beggars throng the doors whining for alms that sanctify the giver, and no old women dressed in rusty black hold back the screens before the door, as they extend a hand. No yellow dogs stray in and out, and in the choir no monks sit singing, spitting occasionally with fervour, as they sing. Religion has an air of having been brought over with the conquest. The air of homeliness, of having grown up with the country, and of being as well established in the soil as are the trees, is absent. Just as, in Protestant

countries, the church is rather, as it were, a temple, than God's house, where the market-woman sets down her basket full of vegetables beside her, as she turns in to pray, and squats upon the floor, her eyes fixed on her favourite saint in ecstasy, or simply fixed from habit, so throughout Spanish America the church is rather a place of worship than a home. In Bogotá, and there only in the churches built at the time of the conquest by men from Spain with all the feelings and traditions of their native land still fresh upon them, is the European look of homeliness and ease to be observed. There, indeed, in the barnlike sanctuaries run up hundreds of years ago, without a definite plan ; in haste, as it were, to have some place in which to glorify the Deity who had protected the stern warriors in their cruelty ; dark, with the dust of ages on the windows making the gorgeous gilding gleam fitfully in the prevailing gloom—all speaks of Spain. In them, Jimenez de Quesada, Belalcazar, and the rest, even the bloodstained Federmann, may have heard Mass together at their strange meeting on the plains of Bogotá.

To-day the Indians stroll in and out of them just as they walk through the doors of their own ranchos, and gaze upon the saints, under whose eyes so much injustice was perpetrated on their ancestors, with that inscrutable, veiled look the Indian turns on everything, so baffling to men of other race. He bows his head before the God of his oppressors, just as he bows his shoulders to the burden that the descendants of his conquerors have placed upon them, and in neither case says anything. What he is thinking of no one

has ever fathomed; but outwardly he is a sad and exemplary Christian, believing everything, enduring everything, questioning nothing, never repining, and as unfathomable as the Sphinx. Still, for all their air of coldness, the churches of the unconquered city are remarkable for having nothing of the Jesuit style, so common in the New World, with its central dome and mouldings like the pastry on an old-fashioned open tart over the windows and the doors.

The cathedral is a long, low building in the Græco-Roman style. The tower is square, and in its openings the great bells, so seldom silent, hang on their wooden beams. Sometimes a vulture flaps lazily and seats himself upon the sacred embrasure, spreading his wings as if he gloried in the sun, and then flies down on to a piece of carrion in some deserted corner of the town.

The church in Cartagena has a look of the cathedral in Valladolid, the pride of Philip and of Herrera his favourite architect. Something it has of the Escorial and something purely its own, sun-baked and calcined, without the smallest lichen clinging to its stones. Inside, like other Græco-Roman edifices, it is gaunt and empty-looking; but a refreshing coolness always reigns about its aisles. Its glory is its pulpit, preserved miraculously from perils of the deep, from pirates, barratry of mariners, and from the enemies of our lord the King. The story goes that the Pope of those days, hearing of the great faith and piety of the citizens of Carthagena of the Indies, wished to reward them with a gift, suitable to himself and them. So he called to him the best artists

of his time and bade them carve a pulpit in the finest marble, to be set up in the cathedral. The work accomplished and duly blessed by God's vicegerent upon earth, it was despatched to the Americas on board of a galleon. She sailed from Cadiz, clearing out with salvos of artillery, left the black shoal known as Las Puercas on her port bow, and set her course towards the Indies. All went well with her till she had nearly reached her goal. The castles and the lions, in their blood and orange field, floated out gallantly from the high jackstaff that she carried on the poop ; the captain paced his quarter-deck, in his buff jacket, with his long rapier by his side ; the crew lounged on the lofty forecastle ; the lookout man, without a doubt, was slumbering in the cross-trees, when someone cried, "A sail!" All was confusion, for in those days in southern latitudes all strange sails were those of enemies, and the accursed French or English corsairs were always imminent. The corsairs, for pirates seems an ugly word to write of our own countrymen, who were no doubt inspired by the highest motives and actuated chiefly by the hate of Romish errors, soon fired a gun and forced the galleon to back her mainsail and lay to. They came aboard, and, in their proselytizing hatred of idolatry and zeal for a pure faith, thoroughly ransacked the ship. They packed up all the gold and silver that they found, not even sparing sacred vessels of the Romish faith the chaplain had stored in his cabin, or others of rich plate the captain kept beneath his bed for his own private use, tumbling them all promiscuously into a gunny sack and

carrying them off. This done they opened conscientiously the boxes and the bales. What was their disgust to find in certain, solid cases a marble pulpit, defiled with images of saints sculptured in high relief upon its sides. Their fury knew no bounds, and in a holy orgasm of zeal, comparable alone to that which armed the hand of Jenny Geddes to launch the stool at the head of the Erastian preacher long ago in Edinburgh when faith and morals both were pure, they cast the cases on the waves. Our Lady of the Sea stretched out her hand, and all the cases, though packed with marble, floated like pumice-stone. Fear fell upon the heretics. Straightway they manned their boats and went on board their damnable freebooting craft and sailed away, packed to the water-line with spoil. But round the Catholic ship the sacred cases floated buoyantly, like children's balloons that have escaped their owner's little hands, upon the Serpentine. Then, for the first time in their lives, did all the crew work overtime. They got the precious cargo all aboard again, and then the captain, after a due thanksgiving, came up upon the poop. Long did he gaze upon the sun, using his astrolabe to check the degrees upon the quadrant (or perhaps cross-staff), and shouting to the Spanish timoneer, who leaned against the tiller taking tobacco, "Keep her full and by," he set her course again towards Cartagena, a spoiled and harried man, but yet contented that the hand of Providence was still about him, instant to defend. He sailed a day or two, and now the breezes turned more balmy and the winds fell light. His thoughts, no doubt, for even

captains of galleons were not exempt (as history tells us) from the ordinary frailties of mankind, began to dwell upon the ladies of the unconquered city, especially on one, a mulatilla, whom he referred to as a "tizon del infierno,"¹ adding some details of her charms that possibly he might as well have kept for his own private ear. He hummed a seguidilla, and, looking up occasionally at the after-leach of the fore- topsail, gave orders to sheet home such sails as were not drawing properly. A voice from the fore-top was heard, hailing the deck, "A sail, a sail, on the port bow!" Soon she drew near, and the black flag flew from her peak. Confusion! she was a Dutchman, worse even than the accursed English who had plundered them before. This time, either our Lady of the Sea was sleeping or the profane and amorous musings of the captain had offended her, for the rude Dutchmen, clattering in their wooden shoes, were filled with fury when they found nothing remained worth taking, so thoroughly had the Englishmen gone through the bill of lading and the charter party. Cursing their fellow-heretics as skellums, they most methodically butchered the crew and set the ship on fire. Then they sailed off towards the doom that certainly awaits Dutch pirates after their lives are over and the seas rest from all their exploits. The giant galleon burned like the funeral pyre of all the oceans going up to the sky in expiation of the crimes committed on the sea and in commemoration of

¹ For the information of such as know no "Christian," I may say that the phrase means "brand of hell," but in no wise snatched from the burning.

the nameless, innumerable acts of heroism, of simple mariners.

Her topmasts were burnt through. Her heavy yards, squared in the Carraca, Puerto de Santa Maria, Rota, or in the Trocadero, fell into the sea with a loud crash, and after sticking up for a brief space, blackened and burning, sank down into the water and floated alongside looking like maimed sea-monsters, as they rose upon the swell. On the high forecastle the great, carved lantern that so long had flickered fitfully over the waves, making the darkness even more impenetrable at night, went up, consumed in a fierce blast of flame. The masts sagged, swayed, and then fell overboard to join the yards. The decks burst open, releasing a hurricane of fire, as if the interior of the ship had been a solfatara, belching out flames that licked up soon the standing rigging and the boats.

The seams all opened as the fire gained on the seasoned teak, and by degrees the vessel slowly settled by the head. The castellated poop, with its carved balconies and gilded mouldings, was raised high in the air. On it still flew the castles and the lions of the Spains, defiantly. A dense smoke slowly crept aft, shrouding all that remained of the doomed vessel in its folds. Through it all appeared a shower of sparks that played an instant in the tropic air as fireflies play about a bush of flor de la Habana and fell into the sea with a long hiss. Then with a moaning sound the vessel lurched more forward, the water crept up hungrily, and with a sigh she dived, the blood and orange flag, tattered and scorched, disappearing sullenly beneath the waves.

Some wreckage floated here and there, a breeze blew off the smoke, the sharks fed greedily upon the bodies, when lo ! a miracle. Up from the whirlpool that the great ship had caused as she went to the resting-place of countless galleons and galeases, the sacred cases were wafted slowly to the surface of the waves. The tumult and confusion of the water caused by the sinking vessel slowly was appeased. The black dust floated away and was absorbed into the sea. The sharks sailed off replete, to their sea lairs. Nothing was left to mark the tragedy that had been enacted, except a fleet of nautiluses hoisting their little sails, and the great packing-cases that rose and fell upon the surge. Wonder of wonders, some invisible power aligned them into the semblance of a fleet. It seemed they understood what was expected of them, or else great Neptune, superinduced by forces greater than his own, impelled them on their way. How long they wandered on the deep is not within our ken ; but what is certain, is that they were wafted to their proper destination and went ashore upon the beach, just underneath the walls of Cartagena, and rested from the perils they had undergone.

The sun beat down upon them, whitening the wood and cracking the dry boards. Barnacles gathered on their weather side, where the tide lapped up and kissed them. Seaweed attached itself to the rough nails and splinters of the cases, and now and then a flight of seagulls alighted tenderly upon the sea-tossed packages, resting a little, then floating off again to hang poised just above the surf.

Years passed, and still no pious hand impelled by a mysterious dream or vision came to their rescue. People cantering on the beach cursed at them volubly when their horses shied, and sailors sat and smoked as they gazed out to sea in that eternal quest to which long years have trained their eyes. Then came some merchants, men without imagination, with an eye to the main chance. Opening the cases rudely, just as if they had contained mere merchandise, they were struck with the beauty of the work. Thinking to turn an honest penny, they embarked them on a vessel bound to Spain. "The saints," as a Protestant but quite impartial writer has it, "still kept their eyes on the Pope's offering."¹

A gale arose, as might have been expected in the circumstances, and forced the vessel to put back. By this time the news had reached the bishop and the consistory, who, calling for the captain, offered to buy the goods. He, though a Catholic Christian, refused to part with them except at such a price as was prohibitory, for of late years the offertory had been held in slight esteem in Cartagena, although the faith was pure. Sadly the bishop and his priests returned to the cathedral, and the skipper put to sea. Again a gale sprang up and wrecked his vessel, and he and all his crew went to the fate appointed for hard bargainers and for heretics. This time the cases floated back at once, straight through La Boca Chica, and came and lay upon the beach. The bishop now perceived that a third miracle had

¹ Albert Milligan, "Adventures of an Orchid-Hunter," p. 211 (London, 1891).

taken place, so in procession the predestined work of art was taken up to the cathedral through the glad population, with incense and with psalms.

The offering of St. Peter's apostolic vicar upon earth had reached its destination, though cast upon the waters for an infinity of days. All was concluded satisfactorily. In the cathedral stands the pulpit, erect and glorious. Under its canopy tedious but painful¹ preachers hold forth on due occasion, as their congregations drowse. No one, except some travelling heretic, thinks of the perils that the marble work of art underwent upon its wanderings on the seas. The congregation, as they perceive the perspiration trickling down the preacher's face, know he is drawing to a close. Gradually, by ones and twos, they all disperse, and when the monaguillo comes round with the collecting-box only a few beatas still remain, gazing in ecstasy or pinned down by rheumatism.

¹ Painful, in the Elizabethan sense.

CHAPTER XIV

THE celebrated pulpit still remains as the chief object of Italian art in Cartagena, and, with its coloured marbles and figures raised in high relief, looks curiously cold and lonely in the vast church where at last it rests from all its perils on the deep.

The town is rich in churches, and perhaps that of San Pedro Clavér is the most interesting.¹ Although the architecture is that the Jesuits employed all over the New World, from the modest mission chapels in San Antonio Texas, in Arizona, and in Paraguay, right down to Chile, yet the Church of San Pedro Clavér has something different about it from any church in the Americas. The eastern front is made of massive stone, brought from the mountains near Turbaco, and as the church stands in a square hemmed in by houses, it has an air as of a church in the Castiles, more homely and yet more dignified than often is the case in South America. Two square, squat towers flank the east front, and over the chief entrance is a rose window, a detail of architec-

¹ The church was founded in 1603 by a Réal Cedula of Philip III. It was first dedicated to St. Ignatius of Loyola. The body of San Pedro Clavér is preserved and venerated in the church.

ture unusual in the Southern Hemisphere. In each of the side towers are set two little marigold windows, and the effect is quite original. The building is bare and simple; but the colour of the stone—a rich, dark brown—gives it a look of warmth, in the same way that the red rocks give warmth occasionally to the drear landscapes to be seen in Iceland.

The church originally belonged to the Company of Jesus, an Order much maligned; but one that, after all, did the best missionary work amongst the Indians in America.

Along the bay stretches what is now known as the Parsonage, most probably the Jesuit establishment of other days. The city walls, running up from the water's edge, retain it on one side. In front, the Martyrs' Monument stands up, modern and stark, with an air of challenge, and a tall fan-palm with its hanging leaves serves as an æolian harp to sing the dirge of the departed Jesuits, when the soft breezes blow from the Caribbean Sea.

Cartagena was no exception to the general rule that the patriot is the greatest enemy of the patriot, as man is the wolf of man. No greater Spanish patriot could well have lived than General Morillo, who in 1815 commanded the armies of the King of Spain—in what is now Colombia. Staunch to his king, and faithful, bloodstained and cruel, he swept across the land, like a destroying angel.

Even Bolivar was not more sanguinary, or careless of his life.

Thus they were both true types of patriotism,

convinced and steadfast in their ideas and inaccessible either to fear or argument.

The Cartagena martyrs were shot in 1816, by the order of the Viceroy Montalvo, after General Morillo captured the town. Their leader was one Colonel Anguiano.

This officer had served in the Spanish army, and having embraced the popular cause became deputy for the town of Tolú. In the Popular Convention he was noted for his fervid advocacy of the cause of liberty. Such a man, of course, had nothing to hope for at the hands of his enemies, and was accordingly shot at once as a traitor, and has since been venerated as a martyr.

The church and parsonage and their surroundings are old-world and picturesque; but the chief glory of the shrine is in the man whose name they bear to-day. The Bollandists, in their "Acta Sanctorum," place him "inter prætermisso" — why, is best known to themselves. They chronicle his arrival in the Indies in 1610; his death in 1654. Pope Benedict XIV., by a decree, declared him "possessor both of the theological and cardinal virtues in an heroic degree." This probably was the first stage upon his *iter aa astra*, for it established his beatific state.

When he was canonized is not made manifest in the "Acta Sanctorum" of the Bollandists. America, so far, has not been too prolific in the glorious company of saints—at least, of those who have been so declared by Holy Mother Church.

With the exception of Saint Rose of Lima,

few saints whose pilgrimage on earth was in the Indies have, so to speak, got across the footlights of the Old World and been accepted upon equal terms with those who, by their antiquity or the strange, cruel manner of their death, become authentic in our minds. Saintship, like a knowledge of the classics, is usually paid for in blood.¹ If not in blood, most certainly by suffering and a self-denying life.

Although the Bollandists, for reasons best known to themselves, pretermitted from their history the life and miracles of San Pedro Clavér, it was not destined that they should be lost to fame. In 1653 a Life of Father Pedro Clavér appeared in Madrid, by the Licenciado Don Geronimo Suarez de Somoça. He confesses in his prologue that he copied most of it from a Jesuit of Cartagena de Indias, one Father Alonso de Andrade, who makes "honourable mention of the heroic works done by that servant of the Lord, Father Clavér, upon the earth, and of the miracles that ensued after his translation to the skies." This confession, so unusual amongst authors as to be almost unique in all our annals, does Father Suarez de Somoça the highest credit and reflects lustre on our confraternity. We take our goods where we can find them, as a general rule, and then, after the fashion of the adulterer in Holy Writ, we wipe our mouths and hope our deeds may never see the light. As Suarez de Somoça gives the lead, pointing the path to literary honesty, it would ill befit a more modern plodder, by the way, to leave

¹ "El Latin con sangre entra," is a saying in Spanish.

the trail so boldly blazed by the honest Jesuit upon the *via crucis* of San Pedro Clavér. El Reverendo Padre Alonso de Andrade, of the Company of Jesus, "natural de Toledo," published his Life of San Pedro Clavér in Madrid in the year 1667 (con privilegio). It is dedicated to the "Most Excellent Señor Padre Juan Everardo Nidhardo, Inquisidor General of the Spains." In it Father Andrade enters most fully into the miracles and the ministries of the life of San Pedro Clavér, completely "wiping the eye" of the Bollandists, if one may apply the phrase to such a company of reverend men, and thus fills up a gap in their great chronicle of the acts of all the saints.

They left him, as we have seen, amongst the "prætermisso," preferring, with European prejudice and that disdain of the Americas that the Americas to-day are paying back with interest, to chronicle the miracles of the most trifling European saint in preference to his.

We who, like Father Alonso de Andrade, know "those Indies" are grateful to him, and Cartagena might well place a tablet in the church where the saint ministered so long to his historian's memory.

Pedro Clavér was born in Cataluña at the town of Verdú in 1585. That town is situated in the bishopric of Solsona, a see probably as well known to the majority of English readers as that of Sodor and Man is known in Spain. His family was noble, and related to the Counts of Benavente. He went to school in Barcelona, studying Latinity and Rhetoric. Greek was not compulsory, as far as we

know, but what is known as “la ciencia media”¹ in common Spanish parlance, probably prevailed. He speedily distinguished himself in both branches of his studies, and was sent to a superior college in the old town of Tarragona. Here he became a deacon, and at the age of twenty-five, his superiors having perceived his worth, he was sent out to Cartagena as a missionary. On his arrival he went to Bogotá for a short interval, but soon returned to Cartagena, where he received priest’s orders and said his first Mass in the Jesuit College about the year 1616.

When he had finished it he took a vow always to say the last Mass at the same altar where he first celebrated. Until his death, during the thirty-seven years that intervened, from that day forth he always kept his vow.

The missionary field was vast. Infidels were wild and savage and lived apart in the thick woods. They issued forth when they perceived occasion to give the crown of martyrdom to the incautious missionary who travelled without arms. The Spanish settlers were, as we learn, “lax and adulterous.” Perhaps the softness of the climate impelled them to the latter failing of the flesh.

In addition to all this, negroes from Africa were constantly arriving in the slave ships, ignorant of the true faith, polygamous, and sometimes cannibals. When they arrived they naturally spoke no

¹ The saying goes, “Pasteles en la pasteleria y ciencia media en la Compañía” (de Jesus)—*i.e.*, “Cakes in the pastrycook’s and ciencia media in the Company of Jesus.” I leave to theologians the exact translation of the term “ciencia media,” holding that the world will suffer little if they fail to render it.

Christian,¹ and so the Spaniards referred to them as muzzled.²

It consequently became the duty and the pride of San Pedro Clavér to unloose their muzzles, both of the body and the mind. We are told that in his life he baptized more than two hundred thousand of them, besides a great quantity of Moors, English, and other heretics.³ How he performed this miracle, for I hold it the chiefest that he wrought, is difficult to say.

After all is said, common sense and faith are but synonymous. Faith usually finds out a way to justify itself. It may be that San Pedro Clavér, who was a Catalan, and the Catalans are the Scotch of Spain, resorted to the methods that used to be observed in Rome, when in St. Peter's the peasants thronged that shrine at festivals. A priest, with the hyssop fastened to a cane, used to dispense the holy water, as with a fishing-rod. In the same way, San Vicente Ferrer, in Palma de Mallorca, when called upon to convert a community of Jews that still persisted in outraging our faith by clinging to their own, resorted to the use of the long cane. Upon a certain day he placed himself, armed with his sacred cane, beside an enormous cauldron full of holy water. The unbelievers were mustered in the square. On one side stood the cauldron with the blessed water, on the other burned a bonfire. Those who refused the holy rite had the alternative of passing through the flames. None were so unbusinesslike as to refuse the

¹ Christian = Spanish.

² "Bozales." "Bozal" is a muzzle in Spanish.

³ "Ademas de gran suma de Moros, Ingleses, y otros hereges."

sanctifying water on their brow. They lost their faith to the last man, but kept their noses, as any traveller can see who takes a stroll in the dark, tortuous streets of "El Barrio de los Chuetas" down to the present day. San Pedro Clavér, however, did not stop at baptism, after the fashion of so many missionaries. As far as in him lay he tried to render the poor wretches' lives more tolerable, treating them as fellow human beings and ministering to their wants in sickness and in adversity.

One of the superstitions that the poor creatures had was that they were all to be killed and their bones ground down to manufacture gunpowder. Through all the horrors of the "middle passage," this terror used to work upon their minds, and the good Father (now a saint, and most deservedly) used to go down and speak to them upon arrival, to comfort and dispel their fears. Had he done nothing else he had deserved his saintship, for the poor savages, torn from their native wilds, confined below decks in the ships, were like wild animals in a corral, trembling in every limb. When he had calmed their fears he used to lead them all ashore, for they walked after him, "just as a flock of sheep follows its shepherd," dumb and pathetically, towards the slaughter-house.

Work was their portion until death released them in most cases, but in so far as he was able the saint alleviated their lot. Still, all of his labours were not confined to materialistic and soul-numbing good works. One day a fellow-labourer in the vineyard of the Lord came to him in distress and asked him his advice. It seems that he (a priest) had laboured

strenuously with a sick negro, urging him to accept the rite of baptism and save his perishable soul. The negro, who perhaps was a stout votary of Mumbo-Jumbo, or a man convinced of the efficiency of prayer at the Long Ju-Ju, had steadily declined. Nothing could move him from the faith in which he had been reared. His fathers, so he said, had all died pagans, and he looked forward to meeting them again in the same faith in which they all had died.

“San Pedro Clavér,” so says his biographer, “rushed quickly on his prey.”¹ Long did the good Father wrestle in prayer by the bedside of the game fetish worshipper, pouring in his gospel broadsides with accuracy and effect. As the faint streaks of the false dawn appeared, and the mosquitoes, sated with blood, flew buzzing off to rest, the unbeliever gave up his false and animistic gods. With joy the good priest poured the soul-saving water on his head, and in an hour or two his “soul gained heaven.”² In fact, the operation was successful, but the patient died, after the saying current in Harley Street. One is glad to learn that the new Christian was buried with considerable pomp and circumstance. His funeral cortège was headed by Father Clavér in person, no doubt contented with the victory he had won over the powers of evil. With psalms they bore the erstwhile votary of Gri-gri and of Feitiço to the cemetery. Music and lights accompanied the procession, and flowers were strewed upon his grave.

¹ “Corrio ligero á la presa.”

² “Su alma ganó el cielo.”

Few negroes in Cartagena have had so fine a funeral, and yet one almost wishes that the old pagan had been steadfast to the last. It is possible in that case that his soul might not have gained the (Christian) heaven, but it would have gone to some place or another and joined his ancestors.

I pass by, as of little moment, as a mere skirmish, in the gospel-field, the saint's conversion both of a criminal and of the executioner upon the scaffold, for executioners are almost always sentimentalists. If it were otherwise the criminals would have to execute themselves. Viewed rightly, the executioner is a scapegoat, taking the sins both of the criminal and of the judges on his own head.

Perhaps his greatest exploit was the conversion of an archdeacon from London,¹ a foeman worthy of his steel. How two such well-matched protagonists met each other is difficult to say, or what was the business that brought the archdeacon to such a distant place, so far beyond the faintest twinkle of Bow Bells.

A concentration camp had just been formed for several cargoes of "black ivory," newly arrived from Guinea, and all attacked with plague. At the same time a numerous squadron of English had arrived, and it may well have been that the archdeacon came as chaplain to the fleet. This Churchman ambulant was, we are told, a man of middle-age, grey, and of great authority amongst his fellows.² Moreover, he was "a great preacher and a master

¹ "Un Arcediano de Londres."

² "De gran autoridad entre los suyos."

of the heresy."¹ The battle raged most furiously, and texts flew fast between the two; citations were adduced, the Fathers of the Church were quoted and duly twisted as either combatant lost or secured the trick. At last, overcome either by the climate or by the reasoning and the faith of Father Clavér, the heretical archdeacon laid down his arms and turned a Christian. Great was the joy in Cartagena of the Indies over the one archdeacon that repented. Solemnly the now repentant heretic was received into the fold.

Whether he stayed in Cartagena a true son of the Church, or once again returned to London to his heresy and beer, we are not told, for Father Andrade has a knack, just like a storyteller in the Soco of Tangier, of breaking off his narrative at the most interesting point. True, he does not come round for a collection, as do the Moors, before he recommences. Would that he did, for the fate of our good countryman, in this world and the next, leaves one perplexed and even hesitating.

After long years of patient work amongst the negroes, of daily visitation of the prisons and the hospitals, Father Clavér's pilgrimage here on earth drew to a close. His health had suffered much by his unceasing labours in the severe and burning climate of Cartagena. His sufferings were grievous, but he bore them as uncomplainingly as he had borne the attacks of the mosquitoes all his life, for it is said he never brushed one off either from his face or hands.

¹ "Gran predicante y maestro de la heregia."

On September 8, 1654, being the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, he died like a true soldier of the Company of Jesus.

His chiefest miracle was his self-denying life. Well is he called the Apostle of the Negroes, for all his life was given to their cause. The habits of his life were simple, for though he loved it he would listen to no music, and never once would walk upon the walls to see the vessels in the bay. He never went to theatres or to hear "dialogues," no matter how well acted or how good they were,¹ nor would he walk in gardens or see interesting things. He did not think it right even to listen to the news from Spain, a thing, his chronicler observes, "so pleasurable to all who live out in the Indies." To this I too can add my testimony, and can imagine what he must have felt when a great fleet sailed in and anchored off the town. It is not probable that Cartagena will produce another saint of his calibre, so humble and so self-denying or so devoid of pride. As we have seen, he had a short way with a sceptic, and yet I trust that it will not be quite unpleasing to him, this brief memorial of his miracles and work penned by a heretic.

It pleases me to think that his self-sacrifice and life of toil amongst the negroes was not unrecognized, although the recognition came, as recognition generally comes, a little late.

In 1851 Pius IX. beatified the saint of Cartagena, and, as with such a man the arguments of the

¹ "Jamás oyó comedias ó dialogos, por buenos que fuesen."

Advocatus Diaboli could not have been convincing, his canonization followed in 1888 under Pope Leo XIII.

Long before that the inhabitants of the "noble and loyal town"¹ had enshrined him in their hearts.

¹ "Noble y léal ciudad." Most Spanish towns have their titles. Madrid is known as "La muy léal, noble y coronada villa."

CHAPTER XV

IF the greatest ecclesiastical interest is concentrated round the beautiful old church of San Pedro Clavér, there are not wanting other old-world buildings in the town.¹ Now turned to a more pacific use (I think a hard-goods store is situated in its lower storey), the House of the Inquisition is a fine monument of the late Renaissance style. It stands in a beautifully shaded square planted with palm-trees, watered by little rills in their cemented channels. In the middle of the square, upright and graceful on a "llanero"² horse, his long reins dangling almost to the ground, his right hand pointing to the inaccessible abode of Liberty upon the highest summits of the Andes, a perpetual menace to Inquisitions of all sorts, Bolívar rides. The fine, old house, with its heavy, carved stone mouldings above the door, looks just like many a house of the same period in Spain, especially like

¹ At the time of the desamortization of the convents many churches and convents were secularized, including La Merced, San Francisco, La Vera Cruz, Santa Teresa, San Diego, and San Agustín. The Palace of Justice stands on the site of the convent of La Merced. A friend in Cartagena used to say, quoting a Mexican poet, that by a stroke of irony, the new edifice, stolen from the Church, has "Palacio de Justicia" written on it in letters of gold. "Con refinada malicia dice en letrero dorado, el Palacio de Justicia, y el edificio es robado."

² Llanero—that is, from los llanos, the plains.

one in the corner of a little plaza in Valencia which might have been its prototype.

Gone is the Green Cross, the ancient symbol of the Holy Inquisition. No more the inquisitor sits with his secret conclave, the forerunner of the diplomatist of modern days and of the trade-union leader, who, both, like the inquisitor, work secretly, their wonders to perform. Many a relapsed heretic must have secured his eventual entry into paradise by the medium of the rack, in the dark dungeons where now a heap of rusty chains, of iron collars, and the rest of the paraphernalia of the "faith" lie rotting in the dark. One only wonders how the Archdeacon of London escaped being translated to a heavenly archdeaconry through the dark vaults of the old house. All things considered, he was prudent to confess himself a convert, for if, as Henry of Navarre said, "Paris is worth a Mass," life certainly is worth so small a sacrifice as a mere change of Mass.

Now, with its massive door, its heavy balconies, and red-tiled roof, the Casa de la Inquisicion serves at the same time as a memorial of old times and a good hardware store, and certainly is one of the finest medieval houses yet remaining in the Americas.

Plaza succeeds to plaza in the curious old town, and but a step divides the Plaza de la Independencia from that of Fernandez de Madrid. In all America there is no square more absolutely Spanish than this. The stuccoed seats would look at home either in Caseriche or Andujar, or any other of the decaying towns, either of Andalucia or Castile. On them

sit chattering, mulata nurses, whilst their charges play underneath the trees. A swarthy half-Indian soldier saunters up and down smoking a cigarette. The milkman or the water-seller drives his donkey, laden with wooden barrels or with cans, in the deep, sandy streets outside the iron railing. Only the barquillero¹ and the water-seller, with his harsh cry of "Agua-a-a," are absent to complete the picture. The railings of the square appear coeval with the conquest, but then the climate soon exfoliates all iron and makes it look centuries older than in reality it is. Six Cuban palms, their trunks shiny and looking like gigantic bottles, rustle melodiously over the little, square corral, if I may use the word, where is raised the statue of Fernandez de Madrid, one of the Liberators. Of all the titles that mankind has in its power to bestow, I prefer that of Liberator. Defender of the Faith is mouth-filling, but then the doubt creeps in: Which faith is worth defending? Knight-hood and the O.B.E. are glorious enough distinctions; the Garter brings no damning merit in its train; and all the rest, from Duke down to Lord Mayor and Labour Leader, have something comic in their train; but yet mankind craves for them thirstily. Liberator alone has something in the sound of it that places it

¹ A barquillero is a man who sells barquillas, a kind of crisp wafer. He carries them in a tin vessel like a churn, slung over his shoulder. On the top of the churn is a miniature roulette table. The barquillero is the delight of the children in Spanish towns. Bonafoix, the late Spanish journalist, a man of genius, depicts his meeting with a barquillero at Etretat, who naturally spoke no French. Asked how he had got there, he answered, "Sometimes embarked and sometimes on foot." Where he "embarked" heaven knows. He may have applied the phrase to a train journey.

above the realm of comedy. For one thing, the few Liberators that the world has known have generally died poor and despised. Either mankind cannot support the gift of liberty, or else the Liberators have not been fitted to survive in the struggle of the unfit. That fact alone confers on them a patent of nobility. Bolivar, perhaps the greatest man that all America, Spanish or English or Portuguese, has yet produced, died poor and disillusioned in the curious old Spanish country house of San Pedro de Alejandria, a few miles from Santa Marta, just at the foot of the Andes that he had crossed so many times during his struggles to emancipate his countrymen. General San Martin was laid to rest in Boulogne, far from his exploits ; and so of all the rest, with the exception of Washington, who doubtless would have shared the fate of his compeers had not he voluntarily gone into the seclusion of his Virginian home. Thus it is pleasing to reflect that the man whose marble effigy stands in the middle of the little square that bears his name, lived to a hundred years of age, loved and respected to the end. It may be that as Fernandez de Madrid was not a soldier, he was immune from that ferocious jealousy that arms mankind against its heroes in the field. Still, from the first he bore an important part in the long struggle against Spain, that raged more furiously both in Colombia and Venezuela than anywhere throughout the continent.

Half-naked negro children play round the little railing that surrounds the statue, and probably of all the lounging population that in the evening, when

the sea breeze sets in, saunters about the plaza, only a moiety have heard the Liberator's name.

The various plazas, green and shady, form as it were a series of oases among the piles of low-browed houses, with their overhanging eaves, iron-studded doors and balconies, with windows at whose bars stand lovers whispering just as they do in Spain. Most of the streets run out on one side to the sea through deep cuts in the walls, and on the other to a *caño*—that is, a backwater—buried in mangrove-trees. Only two hundred miles or so away Colon and Panamá, now modern towns and “sanitized,” enjoy good drainage, heavy taxation, a fine supply of water, with modern lighting, prostitution at the corners of the streets at night, freedom from mosquitoes, policemen, and all the benefits of what is pleasantly called modern civilization, and have become health resorts for the wealthy of New York during the winter months.

In Cartagena nothing of all this exists. Mosquitoes, after nightfall, render night hideous. The mangrove swamps that stretch about the town on every side have not been treated with petroleum, as in Colon and Panamá. Water, though good, is not abundant, drainage so primitive as to be practically of no avail. Yet, such is the way of Nature, and so great her absolute disdain of man and all his fumbling, that Cartagena is at least as healthy as the two Isthmian towns. Wandering about the streets of Cartagena one comes at unexpected corners upon long, sloping paths that lead out on the walls, constructed, I suppose, in bygone days for the move-

ment of artillery and troops. To-day a motor-car glides up them easily, and you emerge from the heat of the town, after the struggle of the day is over, when the sea breeze sets in, into a different world. The palm-trees bend under the wind, the sea is ruffled, and a pinkish haze envelops everything. The avenues that lead on one side up to the suburb of Manga, and on the other to El Cabrero, are planted with the *Ponciana Regia*, whose bunches of bright scarlet flowers, two feet in length, are full of fireflies, and the white villas, buried in the thickets of bananas, gleam out behind their leaves. Everyone breathes afresh, and motors steal about noiselessly upon the sandy roads. The little church at El Cabrero, built to commemorate President Nuñez, a son of Cartagena, looks so like a mosque in the fast falling light, one waits involuntarily for the Call to Prayer when walking on the walls.

A mile or two away the hill crowned by the Convent of La Popa takes on a look as of Vesuvius, conelike and isolated. Then is the time to drive out to La Boca Grande and take whatever air is to be found. Passing through the negro quarter, not much unlike a village near Accrá or Jella-Coffee, with its long streets of shanties where naked negro children play with mangy dogs, their parents sitting at their doors with chairs well tilted back, you come out on a little plain. Palm-trees surround it, and lagoons bisect it here and there. In a depression in the ground all the tin pots and cans of Cartagena are thrown out, and in them lizards innumerable have made their lairs. Vessels for domestic use are there

by hundreds, so that the place may well be styled the valley of the jordans, to use a Georgian phrase.

After this interlude, that brings back civilization so vividly before one's eyes, the road towards La Boca Grande runs between palm woods, till it comes out upon the shore. Before emerging from the woods the palm-trees disappear, and on the sandhills clumps of icaco bushes, called in Colombia "uvas de playa," form a thick underwood. Among them negresses sit patiently waiting for holes dug in the sand, known as "cacimbas," to fill with drinking water. Though dug often but fifty feet away from the salt water, they are always fresh. Good water in the tropics has an irresistible charm about it, and thirst is permanent, so that when a negro girl advances with a gourd and offers it, fanning herself with a piece of palm leaf, you drink, and if you do not necessarily admire—"Drink and admire," so runs the legend on the fountain in Marrakesh¹—you yet are grateful and reflect how many times the conquerors must have drunk thankfully at the same water-holes. The land that forms a natural breakwater to the bay runs out in a long spit. On one side is a ruined castle with its walls and counterscarps. Upon the other an inimitable view of Cartagena ; but a Cartagena sublimated and softened in the sea haze. The walls and churches, castles, and low, flat houses, rising tier by tier, are blended into an harmonious whole ; the fringe of palm-trees looks mysterious in the failing light ; the city, as by degrees the darkness thickens and the moon rises, lies out enchanted and enchanting, as if cut out of cardboard,

¹ "Shrab-u-shuf."

in the blue, tropic night. No sound is heard but the caressing swishing of the waves falling on the beach, and, as the soft breeze brings new life and freshness to the world, you feel inclined to stay for ever listening to the sea and probably would do so were it not for the mosquitos' warning, shrill and menacing.

CHAPTER XVI

NOTHING could well be more unlike the steamers of the Great White Fleet, as the Americans delight to call the fruit boats that ply between New York and Santa Marta, taking bananas from Puerto Limon, Jamaica, and the other ports of the Caribbean Sea, than the old *Lancha Bufalo*.

On the one side all modern luxury: fans, ice, and negro servants, Maimey and Belle and Sadey in their smart clothes from Little Old Noo York, and millionaires passing the winter in the West Indies, contemptuous of everyone who is not rich. Humanity with them commences at the million (dollars), just as in Austria in the old days it started with the baron: the rest are pawns. Perhaps when all is said the "baron" was nearer to a human being, in manner and sympathy, than is the dollar-gatherer. Morals, of course, are as mankind chooses to see them, and in this respect I fancy that the difference between the types is small. On board the fruit boats all was republican and democratic, after the fashion of the copybook headings rife in North America. In reality nothing was farther from democracy, just as is the case in New York, Chicago, or any other city of the States.

The *Lancha Bufalo*, though in design she looked like an old barge, was driven by a wheezy motor-engine. So progress and the past seemed to have kissed each other on the crank vessel, after the fashion of mercy and of truth, though with as scant results.

Her passengers were certainly æons apart from those of the fruit boats in aspect and in their point of view. Neither more merciful nor just than were their brethren in the Lord of the more ambitious craft, they yet were much more human, kindly, and far less hypocritical. Good manners kept them men, whilst not removing them too far from the other animals that tread the earth and breathe the air with us, and without whose co-operation in the Creator's scheme of things we should soon cease to be.

Through a hole roughly cut in the old city walls you passed on to a wharf, ragged and dirty and sweltering in the sun.

On it was crowded a heterogeneous mass of people sufficient to have filled the *Lancha Bufalo* a hundred times or more if they had all been passengers. However, in Colombia, as in Spain, a railway-station or a station platform or a steamer wharf is a sort of agora on which as many of the population as can find room upon it delight to loiter and to criticize, to pass the time of day, or bid farewell to friends in tearful accents, however short the voyage. It is too hot in Cartagena for girls of the lower middle classes to stand about as they do at a southern Spanish railway-station, their faces white with powder, and carnations in their hair. Moreover, in old-fashioned towns such as

Cartagena, girls do not go about alone. No water-seller, as in the East and Spain, slips in and out amongst the crowd. Such customs are for hot, but not for torrid countries, at least in the Americas. It is too hot for fruit-sellers at the time the *Lancha Bufalo* used to put out to sea. Faith in the stability of institutions in the "loyal and noble" town of Cartagena tells me she still casts off at three o'clock precisely, at the hottest hour of the whole torrid day.

The *Lancha Bufalo* boasted two cabins, mere wooden boxes with a framework for a bed, and a rusty, tin-enamelled washing-basin stuck in a shaky stand. Such as they were, they represented luxury and were usually engaged "with anticipation," as runs the Spanish phrase. Once inside them you could lay the bedding, without which no one leaves his house throughout Colombia, upon the wooden frame. The bedding was a simple matter that everyone could easily take up and walk with, consisting of a piece of matting,¹ a pillow, blanket, and a mosquito curtain. This with your saddle gear and "gripsack" made a tolerable bed. From this coign of luxury and comfort you could survey the deck of the little vessel piled high with luggage, and with a moving mass of people, a complete microcosm of the republic. The crew were negroes from Jamaica, the engineer a Dutchman from Curaçao, the captain a Colombian who I think had been a storekeeper and an apothecary,

¹ The piece of matting, six feet by three, was Japanese, and after paying freight and customs from Japan, was sold, I presume at a profit, for two dollars (gold) in Cartagena. The same matting made in the country, though more durable and of better design, cost five or six dollars.

before he went down to the sea in ships. Just as in the accounts of the early Spanish navigators, the pilot was the chief man on the vessel, for it is doubtful if anyone but he had but the most elementary ideas of seamanship. Little by little, as the *Bufalo* moved out and met the invigorating breeze that about four o'clock generally springs up from the sea on the Colombian coast, the heterogeneous mass of passengers evolved from a kaleidoscopic mass of white-clothed men, of draggled women, all mixed up with bales and packages upon the little deck, into its component parts. Then individuals, such as the portly Syrian merchant going to Quibdó, the cattleman from the Sinú, with his tight linen trousers and his flat hat made of dark-coloured straw, his right hand carried with the palm turned out and thumb held upwards from constant lassoing, contrasted strangely with the smart Colombian officer in his spotless, white duck uniform. All these wore the large round spectacles made of celluloid to look like tortoise-shell, with yellowish glasses, that every American, and hence most of the Colombians, who chiefly have been educated in the States, affect upon a voyage. In the sixteenth century, in Spain, those kind of spectacles were called "quevedos," after the poet of that name, whose effigy (spectacles and all) Velazquez has preserved for us in his realistic paint. The effect when many of these spectacled citizens is seen at the same time resembles that of an assemblage of owls, all blinking in the sun.

We passed into a narrow passage between mangrove swamps, called in Colombia a "caño," and took on board some sort of cargo at a little place

called Pasacaballos, a negro village, as African in its appearance as if it had been on the Niger or the oil rivers. Why the conquistadores, for it was they who named the place, so called it, it is difficult to understand. A long experience in passing horses across rivers has always made me look for a place where the animals can enter and can leave the water upon solid ground. Certainly in the little open space before the huts—perhaps the natives dignify it under the title of a “plaza”—the sand is hard enough. Upon the other side there is nothing but a swamp. In countries like Colombia there is a tendency to date all history from the year of independence, and thus most interesting place-names become quite meaningless, sometimes impossible to explain.¹ Luckily the contemporary historians of the conquest were minute in all they chronicled, and a search in their pages often clears up points long forgotten and fallen into neglect. Spanish Americans have retained much of their far-away Arabian ancestors, who, of all men, soonest forget what happened yesterday.

We took in a few bales and packages wrapped in banana leaves, and watched a negro bathing his horse, a job that he performed standing stark-naked like a statue cast in bronze, and pouring water with a calabash over the horse's back. The horse appeared to like it, for he stood quietly enough, and for the negro the fact that all the passengers were looking at him not

¹ Thus names such as “los ballesteros” (the crossbowmen), “frayle muerto” (the dead friar), “Fray Bentos” (the name of an anchorite), and many others, have lost their original significance; most of them sprang out of some incident of the conquest.

twenty yards away, apparently was just as little inconvenience to him as it would have been centuries ago to his wild ancestors upon the Guinea Coast or in the Cameroons.

Dinner was served upon the deck, the captain, so to speak, in the chair, perspiring, but polite, eager to talk what he called "American," having "learned him in the college to Philadelphia, where I pass a year."

As he essayed this idiom, which in his mouth became a sort of pidgin-English, raucous and shotted plentifully with slang, he became an ordinary, not to say vulgar specimen, of a commonplace American, but changed at once into a courteous, well-bred Colombian, in his own native speech. After a meal of rice and beef; of plantains stewed and roasted, boiled and raw; of Indian corn bread called "bollo,"¹ baked in banana leaves, viscous and white; of excellent black coffee, and fruits preserved in syrups, and after a contemplative smoke, watching the Southern stars, each one retired to find a sleeping-place.

Some lay down on their blankets behind the deck-house, others in the boat,² whilst we retired to what I think were called "los camarotes de preferencia," thinking that we should rest. By this time the *Bufalo* had passed the great, land-locked lagoon that stretches out after the caño, and got into the open sea. It was a night such as exists but in those latitudes, serene and beautiful, with every star mirrored in the

¹ See Chapter III.

² There was only one, and it was half full of vegetables. For about seventy passengers there were three or four lifebelts, so that in case of accidents, even if the sharks were left out of the reckoning, the calling, if not the election, of most of us would have been assured.

water and reflected back as in a looking-glass. The vessel left a golden trail behind her in the soft moonlight, and from the land there came a breeze laden with the scent of tropic vegetation. Such nights the early navigators must have known, and probably upon the fateful second watch, when from *La Pinta's* shrouds the sailor¹ saw the light on Guanahani, it was just as entrancing and as beautiful.

Nothing is permanent in life, and weather still less permanent upon the Caribbean Sea. Expecting to pass several hours at rest, I closed the door of my "preference cabin," and after having placed my pillow in the hollow between the cantle and the horn of the high-peaked saddle, soon fell asleep. It was not destined I should sleep for long, for as we neared the Point of Tigua, where the old *Santa Barbara*² so nearly left her rotten timbers and her rusty engines, a sea sprang up so fierce and short, that except once, upon a trip down the Gulf of Mexico from the mouth of the Achafalaya to Matamoros, I never saw the like. The first buck (so to speak) got my head clear of the saddle, and then for two long hours the *Bufalo* knocked about furiously. How the men in the engine-room stuck to their duty is a marvel to me, and how the wretched passengers upon the deck were not all washed away, a greater marvel. As for myself, when after getting round the point the sea as suddenly went down, the moon shone out, the

¹ Some of the early historians, and I think Pedro Martir de Angleria amongst them, say that Columbus himself first descried the coast. I hope it was so, for the remembrance of it must have made his chains easier to bear in after years.

² See Preface.

stars again beamed down, sending long shafts of light into the tranquil sea, I was as bruised and sore as I have ever been on getting off a "bronco,"¹ or emerging from a football scrimmage in my youth. The vessel doubled a little headland, and in a few minutes dropped her anchor in a harbour that in the moonlight looked as if it was a port in some enchanted archipelago in the South Seas. Only the outline of a scarce visible and sleeping town was to be seen, set in a grove of palms. Long did the *Bufalo* scream on her whistle fruitlessly. Nothing was stirring. Suddenly, just as the moon began to set, an hour or two before the dawn, two long, dug-out canoes appeared as it were from nowhere, and paddled alongside. A gentle but sufficient swell was rolling shoreward, and in it the long, crank canoes rose and fell gently, looking like gigantic fish. Carefully, in the increasing darkness, we piled our saddles in one of them, and, holding gingerly to each side of the canoe, set off toward the shore. It seemed a desperately long way off, and the huge, black, triangular fins that rose occasionally close to the gunwale were not exactly reassuring to people not accustomed to canoes.

The paddlers now and then would point to one of the great fish as it turned up a little, its belly shining silvery in the pale starlight, and remark cheerfully, "That is a tiger; he always hangs about us as we go to and fro." After ten minutes or a quarter of an hour that felt three times as long, a broken pier

¹ Bronco=wild horse. The word in Spanish means "rough." It is usually spelled by Englishmen and Americans "broncho," for reasons known (perhaps) to themselves.

seemed to rise suddenly out of the sea. The steps that led down to the water were all broken, covered with seaweed, and slippery as glass. To negotiate a landing was a feat of equilibrium, rendered exciting by the thought that, though unseen, the "tiger" was probably upon the watch. Once on the surface of the pier, the air felt like a furnace, and the short distance, two hundred yards or so, carrying one's saddle in the dark, stepping over broken planks—for the pier had certainly never been repaired since it was built—bathed one in perspiration, so that our entry to the historic city of Tolú, the erstwhile capital of the old Spanish settlement, was an experience I like to think of, but should not care to have to undergo again.

Except the paddlers and a half Indian, dressed in white, but with a cap bound with gold lace to show he was the captain of the port, all the world was asleep. We beat upon the door of the locked-up customs-house, eager to pay to the Colombian Cæsar, whatever might be due. Then, finding all our efforts vain, we crossed the wide, sandy street to a wooden edifice labelled "Hotel," and finding no response from anyone, no matter how we knocked, untied our beds and saddles, hitched our mosquito curtains to the veranda posts, and stretched ourselves upon the floor. I remember looking for a little at the fireflies flitting about the bushes, and listening to a monkey roaring in the woods that lie all around the town, and then waking as it seemed directly, to find the sun shining upon my face, and a grave Indian leaning against the railing of the veranda watching me silently. As

I awoke he took his hat off, and after long and courteous salutations, in which he asked me how I had passed the night, and how I liked Tolú, he said Don Julian Patrón (to whom I had a letter) was expecting us, and that he hoped we should honour his poor dwelling that was quite at our service, during our sojourn in the town.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ancient and hereditary house of Don Julian Patrón was seated commodiously, just at the corner of the plaza of the town. One of those solid, Spanish houses, so frequent in Colombian towns, it had a sort of old-world dignity. Not that it displayed any special architectural features, but it had that air of being built for somebody, and not run up for anyone to live in, that characterizes all Spanish houses in America. It followed the almost universal plan of such kind of houses, being low and long, with lengths of wall that gave it somehow a conventional air. The patio led into a garden, and under a sort of loggia, sitting in his hammock drinking the strong black coffee sweetened with "panela,"¹ that all the world drinks in Colombia, we found Don Julian waiting to welcome us. He rose and offered us his house, just glancing at the letter we had brought to see the signature. "Anyone that my good friend Don Eustaquio commands to me, is welcome." He clapped his hands and a little negro girl appeared with coffee

¹ Panela is unrefined sugar, and is used in most of the republics under varying names. The Brazilians call it "rapadura" and the Mexicans "pilon." It is usually done up in maize or banana leaves in a sort of cake. In summer, melted in water, it makes an excellent "refresco."

and sweet cakes, exactly like the cake the Moors offer you on similar occasions in Morocco, upon a silver tray.

My host was not a common-looking man. His manners, though off-hand, were courteous and befitting to a man who evidently passed his life on horseback, for, like the patriarchs of old, his flocks and herds were his chief source of revenue and pride. Sturdy and strongly built, his olive-coloured face tanned a rich brown by sun and weather, his legs a little bowed with riding, his thick, grey hair a perfect fell, but shortly cropped upon his neck, he wanted but a helmet on his head to look a veritable conquistador. His hands were muscular and brown, his feet small and well shaped, but rather square, as is so often seen in men of Spanish blood. His manner, though courteous in the extreme, was that of one who thought himself the equal of any man on earth (not his superior), and you felt his courtesy sprang from the right motive of all courtesy—his innate self-respect. Long did we talk on things and others, as the saying goes, the war and all that it had brought into the world and taken out of it, as we sat in our hammocks, keeping them swinging with one toe, and drinking coffee, as we whiled the time away till breakfast should be brought. When it was announced it appeared that several notables had been asked to do us honour, and to satisfy their curiosity no doubt, for in the city of Tolú foreigners are not an everyday occurrence, and more especially when they appear with even such a slight, official stamp as I then happened to possess. In South America, just as in

the East, talents, even wealth itself, to which in Europe we all bow the knee, are held but slightly in comparison with governmental rank. That opens every door to the possessor of it, and smooths all difficulties, or a good many of them.

Our talk ran not on governmental matters, but luckily upon more serious things—the price of cattle, the best breeds with which to cross the native stock, and the best ports from which to ship the produce of the packing-house, that all the guests had heard the British Government was going to erect. As all the other guests were cattle-owners, except an educated young Italian, who had drifted to the town and set up as a land-surveyor, and knew as little about cattle-raising as the others knew about his mystery, he naturally felt at sea, and after trying vainly to comprehend our jargon about Herefords and Angus, Shorthorns and Zebus, sat silent smoking, now and then muttering “barbari” in an undertone.

Tolú does not afford much scope for sightseeing, so after breakfast all retired to pass the siesta in their hammocks till it was cool enough to start upon our ride, twelve miles or so along the beach, to see a little port from which in former days cattle had been shipped to the West Indies and the United States. Our ride lay along the seacoast bordered by palm-trees, and now and then by jungle, so thick it seemed a wall of vegetation. Numberless little streams ran from the woods down to the beach, all forming quicksands in which the horses sank up to their hocks, and every rivulet had its bar in miniature, causing a little surf, with tiny rollers, setting in regularly towards the

shore. Above the jungle rose high trees, covered with purple, yellow, or red flowers, whilst the lianas, clasping them like ivy in their folds, struggled towards the light and crowned the trees with bunches of great blossoms, so that it was not easy to make out whether the flowers sprang from the tree or from the parasite. We followed a deep bay, so that although in an hour's riding we saw the point towards which we travelled, sunset was near before we passed the Punta de Piedras and found ourselves inside a smaller bay, sheltered by headlands that made it almost land-locked and calm as a lagoon. Don Julian, who had been riding upright and grave as a statue, suddenly put his horse into a fast pace, and pointing with his whip to a low house buried in coco-palms, said, "That is 'La Hacienda de la Punta de la Madre de Dios,' my house and yours. Spur on and let us drink some cool milk from the green coco-nuts before the sun has set."

His lively little grey struck into such a furious "sobre-paso"¹ that we had to gallop to keep beside him, and with the heat and the spray from the surf, beside which we rode so closely that sometimes it washed up nearly to the horses' knees, we might as well have plunged into the sea. A last stream had to be negotiated before we reached the house. Don

¹ The sobre-paso is an artificial gait that used to be known to the horsemen of the Middle Ages as the over-pace. In it the horse trots with the hind legs and gallops with the fore. It is extremely easy, and Don Juan's grey could easily make nine miles an hour at it and keep it up all day. All the horses of Colombia, Costa Rica, and generally throughout Central America and the north of South America, are trained either to it or one of the other various artificial gaits.

Julian went first, his heavy mule spurs playing ceaselessly upon his horse's flanks, for pacers always must be kept up to their pace, to show the ford. Luckily it was not very deep, and with a struggle through the quicksand on the far side we emerged upon hard ground. A quarter of a mile away stood the hacienda house. Riding up to the door, we found the occupant stretched in his hammock, from which he got up lazily, and, stretching out his hand, bid his employer welcome, and called up several peons to take our horses. Then with the air of a man ordering a cocktail, he said, "You will drink a coco-nut or two after your ride."

An Indian boy, at a signal from him, walked quickly up a tall palm-tree, with as little effort as if he had been going up a stair, and threw some nuts down on the sand. One of the peons cut them open on his hand, a conjuring trick that he performed with a machete nearly three feet in length. They were as cool as if they had been grown under a jungle, and not been baking all the day under a tropic sun. We had passed no other house upon the ride of twelve or thirteen miles, and the hacienda, just at the point of the deep bay, buried in palm woods, and not fifty yards from the seashore, had an air of being the only human habitation in the world, it was so silent and remote. Nothing but sand and palm-trees were to be seen upon the landward side, with the exception of a little mangrove swamp just at the river's mouth. To seaward nothing but a calm, deep-purple sea, with the stars mirrored in it, and not a sail in sight. A

tiger¹ snarled in the jungle, half a mile away. His snarling sounded just like the noises that cats make in London squares. The peons said they heard him sharpening his claws upon a tree. This may have been so, for their ears are quicker far than those of men attuned to motor horns and factory buzzers. I could not hear him, perhaps for lack of faith. What I did hear was the caressing rhythm of the surf as it washed gently on the sand. There were too many sharks to bathe; but luckily the nearness to the sea kept off mosquitos, and as the light waned rapidly, the lonely house, shrouded in darkness, seemed to lie guarded by the palm-trees against the perils of the night.

For hours we sat and talked, "taking the cool";² but what we talked about I do not quite forget, but disremember. I fancy, as is usual in such conversations in such countries, that the talk ran, not on the war, or about Paris, London, or New York. Rather it turned upon Colombia, Bogotá, the Magdalena River, the rolling plains beyond the Andes that stretch along the Rio Meta down to the Orinoco; on snakes and boa-constrictors, feats with the lazo, and most of all on horses and the enormous distance that they had covered in a day. When men from cities talk with those who dwell nearer to nature round the camp fire, the less sophisticated always seem to have much more to say, for they speak unreservedly of the daily incidents of their lives, whereas the city dwellers often have no incidents worth mentioning to talk about. That which entrals us in the realms of the

¹ Jaguar.

² "Tomando el fresco."

electric light ; in streets that reek of petrol and of horse-dung ; our nice dissections of our motives ; the why and wherefore and the details of the last divorce case ; the literary style of so-and-so ; whether a painter should set down that which he sees, or merely cubes of what he sees ; the sordid strife of politics ; and all the infinite and intricate coil of life in cities—become as vapid as a fashionable revue, out on the prairies, in the virgin forests, or on the mountain trail. Not only could the men who listen not comprehend it, but the strayed man of culture could not for very shame talk of futilities to men whose lives are passed in action and in the face of facts.

So it chanced at the lone hacienda by the Caribbean Sea. We wandered with the conquerors up the Magdalena River, toiled with them in the swamps, and froze upon the passes of the Andes upon the road to Bogotá. It seemed as natural to talk of these things as it does in Rome to talk about the Cæsars. Bolívar, the most interesting man the Americas have yet produced, and his fantastic life and strange career appeared quite natural told by Don Julian Patrón. The various revolutions, so bewildering to Europeans, became as clear as noonday, and when related by the men who had taken part in them, ranged one involuntarily on one side or the other, and made one hang upon adventures of some unknown general or another as if his victims had been told in thousands instead of but a miserable poor score or two. As we talked on, great vampire bats occasionally sailed by as noiselessly as barn-owls, and howling monkeys serenaded us, or perhaps held a meeting on their

political affairs. No matter how late Colombians sit talking overnight, at sunrise everybody is astir.

The little port of Cobeñas—destined, no doubt, one day to be important, for ports are few between Cartagena and the Isthmus—is just the place where in old days a slaver might have come into, discharged her cargo and got to sea again with not a soul to say a word. Situated as it is, between the two points that stretch out into the sea, and deeply indented, it makes a sort of horseshoe, and is sheltered against all winds except the north. This wind blows for six weeks during the year, and for the remaining time Cobeñas is perfectly secure. The tide goes out only about six feet, so that deep water comes almost to the shore. A little pier of wood runs out a hundred yards into the sea. Two hundred yards still farther out the water deepens to about thirty feet.

Nothing more primitive in the way of loading up a vessel can be seen, except, perhaps, in some of the Pacific Islands or the Arabian coast. At the pier-head there is a crush for cattle constructed of bamboos. The vessel loading lays out a warp, which is made fast around a palm-tree to keep her steady. The cattle that have come straight from the pastures, not a mile away, are driven down the pier aboard the ship. If one falls overboard he swims ashore and joins the herd again. The steers stand on the beach, "held back," as the phrase goes, by mounted herdsmen, and the whole scene is wild and curious, calling up memories of the buccaneers, who probably often shipped cattle at this very port to take to Cuba or farther up the Main to some of their safe

hiding-places,¹ to salt them down or dry their meat on the boucan, from whence they took their name.

Everything conjoins to make Cobeñas an ideal cattle port. The shores of the bay are sandy, and, except the mangrove swamp in miniature at the little river's mouth, no mangroves grow to block the pathway to the beach. Except when the north wind blows right on the shore there is no surf, and there appears to be no coral reef to set up rollers. Even if it exists, the water deepens so rapidly that it would have little effect at such a depth upon the surface of the waves. Its only rival in the Gulf of Morrosquillo is Cispata;² this port, only nine miles farther to the north, is larger, and is sheltered from most winds, but vessels have to lie much farther out, and the savannahs are several miles away, and round the port there is a mangrove swamp. At both the little ports the roads to the interior are good—that is, for Colombia—in the dry season of the year. In winter—that is, the rainy season—nearly all roads in the republic become mere quagmires, into which horses and mules struggle along, up to the knees in mud. Water is plentiful close to Cobeñas, and the old well in the hacienda house, sunk probably by the Spaniards before the independence, is at least ten feet deep.

As day broke at the hospitable hacienda of Don Julian Patrón, the sun slowly dispersed the mist that

¹ I was not present when cattle were being shipped at Cobeñas, but have often seen them shipped under similar conditions at ports on the Uruguay and the Parana.

² See Introduction.

wrapped the palm-wood as in a seething cauldron, blotting out the trunks and setting all the feathery tops afloat in a great, silent sea. Then by degrees it won its perennial victory over the mist that rises from the sea and from the sun-scorched ground. Slowly the veil that overhung the woods was lifted and revealed Tolú twelve miles away, with all the houses shining in the sun, and the wet roofs reflecting back its rays like sheets of looking-glass. The Gulf of Morrosquillo, sailless and dark as purple, unruffled by the slightest breeze, unbroken, but where here and there a shoal of flying fish sent up a shower of diamonds as they flashed into the sun for the brief moment of their baulked existence in the air. Humming-birds hung poised above the flowers, macaws sailed past uttering their raucous cry, white ibises stood fishing by the little river's bank, and the whole world braced itself for its daily battle with the sun.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT sunrise we left the hacienda, the heavy dew dropping off the eaves of the house like rain, and the world feeling fresh and young. We struck into the palm-wood, passed a complicated system of corrals, rode about a quarter of a mile, and came to a high gate. Passing through it, it then appeared the palm-wood that had seemed a forest was but a fringe, for in a hundred yards or so we found ourselves in quite a different world. On every side a rolling plain stretched out, but a plain set with bushy thickets here and there, and here and there with clumps of noble forest trees, most of them at that season of the year great pyramids of flowers. When you looked closer at the country you saw it was an artificial plain, and that originally it had been a virgin forest, cleared by fire and sown with artificial grasses.

Here and there blackened and decaying stumps stood up amongst the grass, looking like strange animals in that sea of green. Though it had not rained for months, and all the ground was baked and parched, with gaping cracks wide enough to take a horse's foot in them, yawning on every side, and all the places that had been swamps in winter, as it were

frozen by the sun into a series of little pits that had been footmarks poached by cattle in the mud, the planted grasses, Pará and Guinea, were still quite green and fresh. Hundreds of cattle stood about the parklike scenery, some grazing and some sheltering from the sun under the forest trees. These trees, bongos and ceibas for the most part, were tenanted by colonies of red, howling monkeys, locally called araguatos,¹ and by whole flocks of parrots and macaws. The trees themselves had once formed part of the primeval forests, and had been left to serve as shelters and as the rallying-points for cattle, whilst wells in many instances had been dug beneath their shade.

The whole scene gave the impression of great antiquity, and it required but little imagination to fancy that the groups of cattle were antediluvian animals, especially as many of the beasts were of the curious, humped breed known as zebus, and grew to a great size. To make the illusion more complete, one or two armadillos scuttled to their holes, and great iguanas, three or four feet long, ran swiftly through the grass.

As we rode through the plain, every now and then a "vaquero" would come out from behind a clump of bush, so that at last we had a bodyguard behind us who watched our every movement without apparently looking at us in the least. Somehow one felt just as one feels on entering a Moorish house in Morocco or Algeria, where, though no one is seen, the presence of scrutinizing eyes peering through

¹ *Simia ursina*.

crevices and under lifted blinds, makes itself felt magnetically between your shoulders and sends a shiver down the back. The difference was that now and then in Africa a stifled laugh makes you involuntarily turn your head. I will not say the Colombian vaqueros could not laugh; but their brown faces, looking as if cut out of wood, suggested anything but laughter. In fact, most people who pass long days upon the plains, whether in Colombia or elsewhere, alone, exposed to sun and wind, to rain and cold and heat, laugh little, and when they do, there is something almost sinister that seems to mingle with their mirth. Upon the other hand, their manners were most courteous, and all of them saluted Don Julian Patrón with natural assurance and with ease. Nothing escaped their observation, for if a horse happened to start, and I was riding "a jade that would start at a feather," in the words of the old Georgian song, a murmured "Vaya" or "Jesus" showed they were on the watch. After confabulation with Don Julian, they separated into a fan-shaped formation and drove together slowly two or three hundred head of cattle on to a bare space close to a clump of trees.

Though there were monkeys in the trees they did not throw anything down at us, after the fashion of the "gato monillo" in the Bachiller Enciso's narrative.¹ The cattle were quieter than any prairie cattle I have ever seen, and came up in long lines, the vaqueros never being obliged to gallop or to shout, as is the case both in the Argentine Republic and in Mexico.

¹ See Chapter III.

Considering the long time that had passed without a shower of rain, they were in excellent condition. Nearly all of them were either a light, fawn colour, or fawn and white, a uniformity caused by a far-off strain of Norman blood. A few were parti-coloured, brown or black and white. This in Colombia is known as "mapurito," a word also applied to skunks, which are all black and white. It may be Indian in its origin, for it does not sound like a Spanish word.¹ Nothing could well be more unlike a wild "rodeo"² in the Argentine, Brazil, or Mexico. Here were no tossing manes, and horses pulled up on their haunches with a jerk, no fluttering ponchos, no lazos swinging round the herdsmen's heads, no dust, no panting dogs stretched out after their gallop with the herd. The cattle did not move round restlessly, with fiery eyes and lashing tails, seeking an opportunity to break away. In all the herd on the Colombian rodeo only two or three long-horned, angular, old-fashioned-looking prairie steers from Venezuela showed the least uneasiness. These animals, bred on the great savannahs on the Orinoco, were what is called "criollo"³ cattle—that is, native—and hence descended from the cattle brought by the Spanish

¹ However, it is not safe to make too sure of words in Spanish America, as so many words, now obsolete in Spain, have been preserved in the various republics by the descendants of the conquerors, crystallized in the current of their colloquial speech.

² A rodeo is a bare plot of ground on which cattle are assembled for inspection or counting. Sometimes, as in Brazil, salt is placed for them to lick in great blocks.

³ "Criollo"—i.e., "creole"—means "native." Hence, a black man or a white man, a mulato or a zambo, can be a creole of America. Cattle, horses, and animals in general are always spoken of as creole, if they are of native breeds.

at the conquest. Raw-boned and fierce-eyed, though rather low in condition, they yet were heavy animals, weighing at least twelve hundred pounds. Of all the cattle on the rodeo they probably would have been by far the most dangerous when shut in a corral. Their hides were heavy and their horns immense, and in their native wilds they probably were fleet of foot as antelopes.

They had been brought by ship from Venezuela a year before, but had not fattened well after the voyage. In the rodeo there were several other very heavy animals, and as distinct from all the rest as were the Venezuelan steers. Dark red, and very high upon the leg, Don Julian pointed them out with pride as we rode slowly through the docile herd that parted mechanically as we advanced. He said that they were crosses from a zebu bull that he had brought from the Island of Jamaica. Certainly they were splendid specimens for size and bulk, if not for quality. One young bull, only three years old, weighed twenty hundredweight, and it appeared his sire was heavier. Don Julian explained with pride that the race is immune from ticks, runs to great size, and, as it took its origin in the tropics, is little subject to the diseases that attack breeds coming from the north. The native cattle were the best native cattle I had ever seen, tamer, and heavier, and better shaped than are the cattle of the native breeds either of the Argentine Republic or Brazil. Many were fully nine hundred pounds in weight, and some few nearly twelve. The vaqueros were as quiet-looking as their cattle. Though all had lazos, none carried

arms or had that air of wildness that you see in the cowboys of the Western States, the Mexicans, or Argentines. Still, they were quite efficient at their work, though without much apparent pride in their horse-gear or in their own appearance, a thing unusual amongst cattlemen, no matter where they live.

The heat was stifling, and their little horses hung their heads and let their ears flap backwards and forwards, a sign that they were suffering from the sun. When the rodeo had dispersed, we rode in a sun fit to roast an ostrich egg, for several hours, through the "potrero," looking at the cattle and especially searching for the great zebu bull that Don Julian referred to "as a portent."¹ As often happens in a search for something, that you find another thing of equal or superior value, in riding up and down the vast potrero,² I had great opportunities for observing both the cattle and the land. The cattle still continued to be all of the same fawn, fawn and white, or cream colour, with an occasional "mapurito" animal. There had not been sufficient time for the recently introduced cross of zebu blood to take effect, except in a few instances. When it had done so, the tendency had been to darken the colour, to give weight and strength, and to add fierceness to the breed.

With all the advantages of a race originated in the tropics, and therefore more or less immune from ticks, its suitability for draught purposes, and its hardy constitution, I should consider it a misfortune if the

¹ "Un portento."

² "Potrero," literally a place for colts ("potros"). This one was many miles in extent, and the idea of its being bounded by fences was never present, as the fences chiefly ran through woods.

breed were to spread itself over Colombia. The country is not one in which draught oxen are much used. The beef of the zebu is coarse. The animal itself is much less reproductive than is the Angus or the Hereford. Lastly, if the zebu were to spread itself over the vast savannahs on the Meta and the Casanáre, known as Los Llanos de Casanáre, a breed would spring up likely to become extraordinarily wild and coarse. This probably would not matter so much, for during the late war it was almost proved to demonstration that wild prairie cattle are just as suitable for the packing-house as were the better breeds.

Beside the zebu cross, scattered about the potrero were a few Herefords, chiefly of one and two years old. They seemed to thrive, as do their race in almost every climate of the world. In such a climate as that of El Departamento de Bolívar, where the thermometer probably seldom falls much below eighty degrees (of Fahrenheit) I am convinced no breed would give such good results as would the Hereford. They are the ideal cattle for a ranch, easily fed, enduring rapid changes of temperature, and not too heavy in the hide or bones. Certainly they soon become extremely wild and run at the approach of man, but on the other hand are rarely savage when enclosed, and every cattleman knows the advantage of having gentle animals to deal with when shut up in a corral. Crossed with the native breed they would produce a splendid animal, and one that easily might run to a considerable weight. In the true tropics the Shorthorn soon degenerates, and needs infusion of new blood. Strange as it may appear, the Angus

seems suited to the climate, but suffers much from ticks, and its savage temper renders it dangerous in ranch work. After much riding up and down, and just as we were giving up the search, we came on "El Portento," the old zebu bull of which Don Julian had spoken with such admiration and respect. As he glowered at the horsemen from a thicket, beneath whose shade he stood to shelter from the sun, he really looked portentous and like an inhabitant of a primeval world.

Dark brown, so dark that in the shade he seemed quite black, his enormous shoulders and comparatively light legs made him exactly like a buffalo. Apparently about six years old, he had acquired that look about the neck and shoulders, as if in armour, so thickly did his hide fall into folds around his dewlap, that bulls often take on when they advance in age. His owner estimated that he weighed at least twenty-two hundredweight, a considerable bulk even for a Shorthorn, and I should think his estimate was right. Few cattlemen in the possession of their senses, unless mounted on an exceptionally heavy horse, would have dared to lazo him, and even then would have had a formidable task. Though I have known Mexican vaqueros¹ catch and subdue a grizzly bear, the risk of lazoing "El Portento" would not have been much less. We did not put the venture to the test, but prudently rode round him at a little distance, keeping our eyes well open for a sudden rush, a thing that he was said to be quite prone to

¹ To accomplish this feat at least four horsemen are required, and they run great danger.

execute. As he stood underneath his thicket, with the band of mounted men watching him from a respectful distance, amidst the wild surroundings and with the hoarse cries of the flocks of parrots that flew occasionally over our heads, the scene was striking and not easy to forget.

Though the surroundings were so different, I thought that in the Caledonian forest in the days of Hector Boece and Fordun, one of the fierce white bulls of which they speak, when brought to bay under an old, gnarled oak, must have looked much as the portentous zebu looked, on that hot morning in the Colombian wilds.

Although, like nearly all ranchmen, I was convinced the Hereford is the only ranch steer, it may be that Don Julian Patrón was right in his opinion that a cross of the zebu with the native breed was the best animal for Colombia, or at least for the low, tropic lands. In cases of the kind, expert opinion usually proves valueless against good level knowledge of existing circumstances.

By this time we had been riding six or seven hours, and even Don Julian confessed that it was hot. Two stricken hours lay between us and the little ranche town of Palmito, for in the great potrero where we were, there was neither shade or anything to eat. We struck into the "paso"¹ and faced the heat that came down from the sky and met the heat that rose from the parched ground. It was so hot, the sweat dried on the horses' coats like the salt water dries upon a sailor's beard. We passed

¹ See note on p. 177; also p. 4.

innumerable low hills, went through several high gates of similar potreros,¹ and watched the cattle bunched, just as sheep bunch on a hot day, their heads together, pushed as far as possible under the slightest shade afforded by a thicket or a clump of trees. We rode through dried-up swamps, all poached and pitted with old cattle-tracks, remarking as we rode along, with our hats pulled down as far as possible over our eyes (the stirrups hot enough to blister the bare hand), that the cattle, though they had suffered from the drought, were still in marvellous condition. Disease of any kind was rare, and ticks, in spite of heavy bush, infrequent. At last, when we had almost thought Palmito must be a city ambulant, after riding down a sandy hill, the exhausted horses stumbling and tripping, and the vaquero spurs keeping up a constant jingle on their sides, we suddenly came upon a little river running between high rocks. For about half a mile we followed it, riding along its sandy course, splashing delightfully in the tepid water that in the heat seemed almost cool, until Palmito burst upon our sight.

Set on a little hill, with a great, unfinished church standing up high above the houses, the town appeared. All were asleep, for it was just the hottest time of the whole day, between the hours of three and four. We rode past sleeping cottages buried in hedges of bright crotons and of bignonias, shaded by coco-palms. Even the dogs were sleeping, an unusual thing in towns, such as Palmito, in South America. The occasional horses, standing saddled under reed-

¹ Potrero = fenced pasture-land.

thatched shelters, rested on a hind-foot and were too listless even to switch their tails against the myriads of flies that buzzed about them.

As we advanced into the little town, we passed by stores with the doors left wide open. Such goods as were on the shelves were left undefended, but by the general genius of sleep. Sometimes in passing by a house, through open windows we could see the inhabitants stretched in their hammocks, slumbering underneath mosquito curtains. Remembering that once, in youth, I had ridden into a store in the Argentine Republic, rapped with my whip upon the counter, and no one answering, turned and ridden out again, as we passed by an open store at the outskirts of Palmito, just at the angle of a street, I rode into one door and through the other, and no one stirred within the house.

When we arrived in the middle of the enormous plaza, round which straggle the low, one-storey houses, thatched with palm leaves, to be seen in every country town throughout the tropics in Colombia, we pulled up at the veranda of a house where lived a friend of Don Julian Patrón. No one was stirring, so we unsaddled, threw our horse-gear into the middle of a darkened room, and after seeing that the horses were tied in the shade, sat down upon the saddle-cloths till someone should wake up.

Though we were all men broken to the tropics and the saddle from our youth upwards, our clothes were saturated, and perspiration dripped from our faces on the ground. At last a sleepy voice was heard saying: "Is that you, Julian?" and from an

inner room appeared a man who bade us welcome and not unnaturally asked, "Why in God's name have you been riding all these hours in the sun?"

Then, to our great astonishment, for certainly I should as soon have looked for "artichokes at sea,"¹ as goes the Spanish saying, he said, "I will send out for ice." I never ascertained whether the offer was merely an instance of "dandose charol"² or not, although I fancied I detected a faint smile run over the grim features of Don Julian Patrón. At any rate, no ice made its appearance, and we proceeded to drink "panela-water"³ to our hearts' content.

It was not a long task to inspect the natural beauties and the architectural features of Palmito. The church, a huge, unfinished building, was rather interesting. Before it stood several large wooden crosses, part of a Calvary. Inside it was the beau-ideal of a church for a hot country, scrupulously clean and empty, and not disfigured by cheap prints from Germany of the Stations of the Cross, abominations set up in so many Catholic churches in all parts of the world.

When we had seen our horses fed, a ceremony always pleasing to a horseman, and necessary in countries where they must carry you next day, we strolled into one or two of the stores, which in towns like Palmito take the place of clubs. As usual in Colombia, their owners were all Syrians, called by the natives of the country "Turcos," a cruel name

¹ "Pedir cotufas en el golfo"—*i.e.*, "ask for artichokes at sea."

² Literally, "putting on patent leather"—*i.e.*, giving oneself airs.

³ "Panela," unrefined sugar.

enough to give to Syrians had those who gave it comprehended its full irony. Both in Colombia and Venezuela, Syrians seem to have monopolized the stores. In the smallest hamlet in the interior they are to be found. Industrious and intelligent, they easily outdo the native-bred Colombians as shopkeepers, and fill the same place that is held in East Africa by the Banyans, and are as cordially disliked. All of them were well posted on the varying fortunes of the war, and all were pro-Allies. As we walked back across the sandy plaza, under the stars, and with the bats in dozens shrieking above our heads, the fireflies flitting in the orange-trees, all was so still and so remote, that the world seemed to have stood still a century or two, or we ourselves to have been marooned, in a kind of fourth dimension, outside of ordinary life.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN we arrived at the house in the plaza that we had taken possession of so unceremoniously, it was evident that something had gone wrong. There were no lights and no sign of a dinner, only a messenger, who said Don Julian was waiting for us at another house a little distance off, close to the outskirts of the town. Through sandy lanes we ploughed our way for about half a mile, passing by ranchos where the dogs, having recovered energy after their noonday sleep, greeted us like a pack of jackals. The house where Don Julian was waiting for us proved to be near the river in an imposing clump of forest trees. Dinner was ready, and we all sat down to it most heartily, except Don Julian's major-domo from Cobeñas, who had a touch of fever from riding in the sun. He lay upon the floor groaning occasionally and taking aspirin with avidity from the tubes proffered him from every side. No self-respecting Colombian ever seems to stir from home without his tube of aspirin and bottle of specific of some kind or another against the bites of snakes.

Don Julian presided at the board with all the dignity of a conquistador.

As usual, several "notables" had been invited to

attend. As they all knew the object of my visit to Colombia was to set up a packing-house, should it prove feasible, and most of them were cattle-owners, the talk quite naturally ran on the proper place to build in and on the quantity of cattle that were obtainable; from that it wandered off, so to speak, into fairyland. As I sat perspiring in a linen jacket, and more or less "molido y quebrantado," like Don Quixote,¹ after my ten or eleven hours on a fractious horse in a terrific sun, I heard myself referred to as the "Saviour of the Country." Knowing my public, I sat quietly, now and then killing a mosquito, or brushing some long-legged wonder of the insect world from off my neck; now and then extracting some flying pest or other from my coffee, and ever and anon murmuring "Gracias caballero" at the end of a fervent period.

It appeared the generous heart of the Colombian nation had always yearned towards England.

"You, sir," said a young orator, "embody for us the fulfilment of our hopes. England in days gone by sent out her legions to shed their blood for liberty, under the glorious banner of the Liberator. There is a subtle sympathy between our countries that extends itself across the sea, leaps over mountains, overcomes all difficulties, making the hearts of our far-divided fatherlands, beat in one great pulsation and in unison. This packing-house which England is to found will pave the way for even greater

¹ Don Quixote, after his various adventures, especially after his encounter with the Yangueses, is always described as "molido y quebrantado"—literally, "passed through a mill and broken up."

mutual esteem between our peoples. Our fertile and prolific, tropic soil needs but the fructifying touch of capital . . . of English capital. I see the Old World, with its secular experience, stepping in to help its younger sister that the illustrious Genoese brought into the family of nations. England, the lamp of liberty, that little island set like a brilliant in the stormy northern seas, that rose to eminence by the valour of her sons and through the fostering care of a long line of wise and liberal statesmen,¹ will aid us with her advice and . . . and capital.

“Our hearts are virgin, and from our virgin soil shall come a fervent and a generous response. Long live the packing-house ; long live England, victory to the Allies ; from the topmost summit of the Andes the spirit of the Liberator looks down upon us in Palmito here to-day ! . . . I have spoken ; now I extend the right hand of a Colombian in sympathy and welcome. Long live Liberty !”

It was a glorious effort, and as the perspiration rolled down the speaker’s brow, I tried to recollect all that I knew of the history of Colombia and of the independence wars, for I have always held that oratory has but one useful function . . . to excite enthusiasm and tell the audience that which they know a thousand times better than the orator himself. So I sat waiting, waging a guerrilla warfare with the insect world, mopping my forehead, and sipping my panela-water. Several more guests, so to speak, took the floor, although in most cases they did not rise, but spoke, like Roman senators, seated in their chairs.

¹ Mr. Asquith was, I think, Prime Minister at the time.

One gentleman thought I might mention to the spiritual descendant of the illustrious Pitt who now directs the destinies of Britain,¹ that the institution of a land bank, to be styled “El Banco Hipotecario del Departamento de Bolivar,” would be, not only a great boon to cattle-owners, but would do much to cement the friendship between our peoples, to which his friend, Don Emilio Vazquez, had alluded in terms of eloquence.

I hope I rose to the occasion.

Of one thing I am certain, in my discourse Bolivar, Boyaca, and Carabobo, the brave llaneros under General Paez, the infamies of General Morillo, and the Cartagena martyrs, jostled one another. In my mind's eye I saw the Liberator, passing the Andes like a second Napoleon or a Hannibal, heading his troops alone—superb, young, enthusiastic, the darling of the “daughters of the republic,” the lodestar of the men. I watched him entering Lima, with flowers showered down upon his head, and saw him at the zenith of his fame. Then came the rift within the patriotic lute and disillusionments thickened, till at last, betrayed, sick, poor, and heartbroken, he paced the garden in the little Quinta de San Pedro near Santa Marta, under the secular trees, beneath the shadow of the mountains, and heard him ask to be buried in Caracas . . . “ungrateful country that I have tried to save.” My scanty audience took it, I think, for a sound business statement, quite in the English style. No, señor, not eloquent perhaps—

¹ It may be after all that it was Mr. Lloyd George, not Mr. Asquith, who was Prime Minister at the time that I was at Palmito.

the English waste no words, they have a saying: "Times is money"—but pertinent and illuminating such as only a son of Albion could have possibly evolved.

Now and then Don Julian, I thought, smiled grimly during my remarks, but when I had concluded said quietly, "Yes, I think what we want is capital, but we have got first to provide the raw material." The others, though some of them had been in the United States and all were quick-witted, as are most Colombians, were pleased with what I said, though any one of them could have said it far better for himself, for oratory in South America grows upon every hedge, and as the hedges usually are formed of crotons, or some other variegated plant, it takes the hue they lend.

When this unofficial meeting, which perhaps may best be described as a "*cœnaculum*," came to a close, we were left—that is, my secretary and myself and Don Julian, his major domo and a nephew, who had attached himself to us, partly as guide, partly as philosopher and friend—to sit and smoke, for as it was but ten o'clock, and no one in Colombia, at least in the hot regions of the coast, dreams of going to sleep before midnight at the earliest, we had an hour or two to waste. In almost every language, men talk of killing time. In Spanish the expression is "to make time,"¹ which more or less corresponds to our own "passing time," and thus avoids the murderous inference, for after all, time is our greatest friend. "Time and myself against three others," was a

¹ "Hacer tiempo."

reported saying of Philip II., known to his countrymen as the Prudent, and this shows he had understood how valuable is time . . . when it is on our side.

By degrees the company dispersed, leaving us with our host and Don Julian. Both were educated men, had travelled, and had seen the world—that is, the world of the West Indies and the United States. One, an absolutely white Colombian of pure Spanish blood, assured me that a land bank would be a capital investment. He thought it might well advance capital to landowners on the security of their cattle and their estates. Local capitalists exacted two per cent. per month for all advances, and capital was scarce. The idea seemed good enough, and without doubt some day the United States, or perhaps a syndicate, will take it up, and in a little the Colombian landowners will find they have become its slaves, and have to sell their hypothecated lands for anything that they can get. Such is the general effect of institutions of the kind in countries such as Colombia, where, though the “gombeen-man” is perfectly well known, he is a native of the place, and local use and wont keep his nefarious practices to some measure in restraint. A foreign syndicate is not amenable to any restraint of that kind, and if by chance any “desgracia,”¹ as it is called euphoniously, befalls a citizen of the United States, a howl goes up about the “massacre

¹ A “desgracia”—literally, “an accident”—is of many natures. If it should take the form of assassination it is still referred to as a “desgracia” in Colombia and Spain.

of our citizens," and the big stick is brought to bear.

By this time Don Julian's major-domo, by dint of aspirin and frequent applications to a bottle of old rum, had got his fever under. Old rum (*ron viejo*) is a standing joke throughout Colombia, where it is said to be distilled on Saturday and become old by Monday. Such as it was, it had a marvellous effect on Anacleto Ramos, who sat up and volunteered a fund of information upon botany, on international law,¹ and upon snake-bites. On the latter theme he soon waxed eloquent, as most Colombians who live in the coast regions are not unnaturally rather apt to prove, as snakes of many and varying breeds are rife in all the woods.

Don Anacleto had much to say about the waco-plant, which under different names is known in nearly all the republics in Central America, in Mexico and Texas, and right up to the States.² The waco was, as he averred, "good medicine," but mere gullery compared to a plant growing not far from Cartagena, which by his description seemed to be an *aristolochia* of some sort or other. The juice of the root chewed and introduced into a serpent's mouth, "of the most venomous that lives," straightway stupefies it, and you can handle it with impunity. "Yes, sir, with

¹ "Derecho de gentes"—international law—is a favourite study in South America, and is possibly as useful to the students of it as the higher mathematics, spiritualism, or mysticism would be; but decidedly less useful than a tincture of veterinary surgery might be to men who are constrained to travel on horse or mule back.

² Your real Texan, in his familiar talk, never seems to think, or at least allow, that Texas is one of the United States, as he always speaks of a "man from the States" or a "horse from the States."

complete, complete impunity ; but more than that, if the malevolent creature that first deceived our Mother Eve is forced to swallow a few drops, it dies incontinently, in fierce convulsions, so sovereign is the juice." Don Anacleto never had tried the experiment himself, but knew that it was as he had narrated it, for he had had it from a priest, a friend of his, a man who could not lie.

As snakes abounded in Palmito, and probably were crawling in the jungle not fifty yards from where we sat, we were all much impressed. It may be that there are several methods just as efficacious with a snake as to introduce poison in its mouth, which seems a sort of carrying coals to Newcastle, but we said nothing, though I reflected that after all it might be as Don Anacleto said it was, for I remembered the old Spanish rhyme of the tarantula¹ which says it "is a wicked beast that neither sticks nor stones avail against."

At last even Don Anacleto became silent and stretched himself to rest in the hammock that he had been using as a chair, remarking that if a vampire-bat were to fix upon his toe he knew a plant that would soon staunch the blood. However, he did not communicate its name or its appearance to the rest of us. Don Julian said he was an original, but "good as bread"; moreover, he knew bookkeeping, and though he had heard he belonged to a Freemasons' Lodge,

¹ "La tarantula es un bicho mu' malo, no se mata con piera ni palo." Beasts being given to mankind to kill in any way they please, the tarantula seems, as it were, a sort of *lusus naturæ*, and it is a pity that there is no death-compelling aristolochia placed by Providence in Spain.

was a true Christian at the heart, and, though a little dark in colour, perfectly white. This enigmatic phrase I took to mean that Don Anacleto was an educated man, wore a good suit of clothes, and did not labour with his hands. He also carried a revolver with a mother-of-pearl stock, although, as fate would have it, he was out of cartridges. This useful piece of furniture proclaimed his racial status, for in Colombia only "los blancos" carry weapons of the sort.

The others gradually, after hoping that we should rest and pass a good night, wrapped themselves in their light cotton "ruanas"¹ and lay down, some in their hammocks, others on the floor, with their heads resting on their saddles, the fittest pillow after the kind of day that we had passed.

I stood a little under a great tree, listening to the noises that in such kind of places as Palmito rise from the woods at night. It seemed that the whole forest, so silent, but for the parrots here and there in daylight, had come to life in the dark hours, and that strange beasts were on the prowl. One heard the parting of the bushes as they passed along, and the soft swishing of the twigs as the leaves came back to their position when the animal had passed. Bats and owls floated by. A heavy scent of flowers, that seemed to relax and shed their fragrance in the cool air after the long, hot day had kept it back constrained and sunbound, filled all the atmosphere.

¹ A "ruana" and a "poncho" are the same thing—*i.e.*, a square piece of cloth or other material with a hole to pass the head through.

The sky was deepest purple, the stars brilliant and steady, without the fitful twinkling that they show in northern latitudes, and in a patch of moonlight, standing near a well, a gourd-tree with its great bloated fruit and air as of a primeval vegetation looked strange and terrible.

CHAPTER XX

NEXT morning, according to the immemorial Colombian use and wont, the horses had strayed far into the recesses of the pasture where they had been turned out to graze. Quite contrary to the usual custom in the Argentine Republic and Mexico, none of them had been hobbled or tied to a stake rope. So we waited, drinking strong coffee, till the sun was high in the horizon, losing the precious hours just after dawn, when every horseman likes to kill a league or two before the heat begins.

At last the horses were all found and driven in, and luckily none of them had been bitten by a vampire-bat and rendered weak through loss of blood. We saddled hastily, bidding good-bye to our host and to Don Anacleto, to whom we gave a tube of aspirin, a gift he qualified as "precious in the extreme and grateful as the manna to the Israelites." Don Julian, in spite of our entreaties, rode with us half a league upon the way, sitting erect and looking like the Commendatore's statue in the opera. I thanked him, making him promise to visit us in England, in which place I assured him he had a servant and a house. Similarly, he placed his mansion in Tolú once more entirely at my service, and we

clasped hands. No sooner was this ceremony accomplished than he touched his horse with the spur, checked him and made him rear, and, turning in the air, struck into a fast *sobre-paso*¹ on the homeward road. In fifty yards or so he stopped, shouted "Adios Don Roberto!" to which I answered "Adios Don Julian, and go with God!" He vanished into the cloud of dust that has shut off so many hospitable, good friends in South America—friends of a day or two sometimes, but unforgettable.

For the ensuing fortnight or three weeks we rode all day, or at least until the siesta-time, in the hot sun, endeavouring to reach a house to pass the hottest hours. Houses are few and far between in El Departamento de Bolivar, and now and then we had to pass the siesta under the trees, by river banks, lighting a fire to keep off the mosquitos, and sitting on our horse-gear in the smoke.

Haciendas, large and small, we stopped at to inspect the cattle, always receiving the hearty welcome that distinguishes the Colombian. I used to think that, in addition to their natural kindness and their hospitality, they liked us in our character of newspapers ambulant. Travellers are infrequent in that country, and news a rare commodity, and as it had not rained for full five months the tracks, though good to travel on, were pretty nearly waterless, and pasturage was scarce.

Though not unduly curious about the war that

¹ *Sobre-paso* is the over-pace that was common in Europe in the Middle Ages. In it the horse gallops with front and shuffles with the hind legs.

at the time had left Colombia untouched economically, the people naturally were pleased to hear about it from one, who, so to speak, came from the centre of affairs. Though in reality, as it was several months since I had left home, I knew but little more of what was going on than they did, I found myself looked on as an authority. So on arriving at one of the groups of buildings that constitute a hacienda in Colombia, with the store, overseer's house, corrals for cattle, and the dwelling-house—long, low, with overhanging eaves and thick thatch roof—after the compliments that are necessary had been interchanged, the drought discussed, and the condition of the cattle; inquiries made as to whether there was water in such and such a place, or if the tigers had been killing many calves, and how Don Marcos Fidel Suarez¹ chances were looking for the approaching presidential election, I sat down on a solid, old Spanish chair, seated with raw hide, to talk of strategy. I found it was surprising how much I knew about the matter, giving my views on military affairs with, I hope, accuracy. The diplomatic situation was far easier. As every South American has his own idea upon diplomacy, I used to wait until my host delivered his opinions on the Balkan question, upon the attitude of Greece and of Roumania—on the necessity of a free Albania, and whether Enver Pasha and Talaat were German agents or international rogues. Then I agreed with him upon his major premises, and now and then put in a query or hazarded a doubt on minor matters, saving my face and his as far as possible.

¹ This gentleman eventually became president.

Our business took us to many a strange corner, for we travelled without a plan, going from one hacienda to another, where the greatest quantity of cattle were to be found. In none of them were there the vast herds of Brazil or of the Argentine, or those of Mexico. Perhaps the finest hacienda in El Departamento de Bolívar is that called Berástegui. It has been in the possession of the same family since the days of Charles III.¹ This really fine, semi-feudal place extends to about thirty thousand acres, and contains some of the richest cattle pasture in South America. From the old-fashioned hacienda house, with its dependencies, stores, corrals, and peons' huts, a vast and open plain stretches out, dotted with palm-trees here and there. On the horizon, about four miles away, is a low range of hills, which are included in the property. As the plain is as level as the sea, the hills appear immense though in reality not more than three to four hundred feet in height. Feeding in the tall Pará grass, in a sea of green, on every side were cattle, and all in good condition in spite of the fierce drought. Amongst them ran three or four Angus bulls that seemed to stand the rigorous climate to perfection, looking quite sleek and fat.

Some wild and angry-looking Venezuelan bullocks with enormous horns moved away with their heads high in the air, and broke into a trot, a hundred yards or so away from where we rode. The rest were of quiet Colombian stock, and went on feeding as we passed through them, though there were six or seven

¹ Charles III. of Spain succeeded to the throne in 1759. He had previously been King of the Two Sicilies.

of us spread out in a long line. In no ranch country in the world have I seen cattle so extraordinarily tame, and certainly few cattle ranches within the tropics finer than Berástegui.

Water is permanent on the hacienda, and the cattle never are moved to marshes in long droughts as is the case in almost every other place in the hot coast lands of Colombia.

Life on the hacienda was entirely different from that of Palmito, for we sat down to dinner in a dining-room, and conversation was less local in its character, for the owners of the place had travelled widely, had been in Paris, and spoke French and English fluently. Still there was something patriarchal in their relationship to their dependents, such as I had not seen before in the department.¹ The talk in the veranda after dinner turned upon Venezuela. It appeared that by the overland route it took the cattle at least two months to reach the Magdalena River at El Banco, a little port from where they were ferried over and driven down to the coast lands. It must be a most interesting trip across the Andes through the great forests on the foothills, and down the trails that come out in many places on the River Magdalena's banks. The country that lies between El Banco and the Andes is some of the wildest in the republic. Along the banks both of the Rio Cesár and the Lebrija are tribes still unsubdued. Some of them are reported to be cannibals, and all use poisoned arrows of an extremely deadly kind. One of the guests had made the journey and had much lore of Venezuela and the

¹ Departamento de Bolívar.

llaneros¹ that interested me greatly, as all he said reminded me so much of the gauchos that I remember in my youth.

Their melancholy songs, mostly of horses, of love, and of revenge, struck me as almost identical with those that I had heard long years ago in Entre Ríos, the Banda Oriental, and round Bahia Blanca,² when it was exposed to Indian raids. These songs were as interminable as were "forebitters" in the days of sailing ships, and were invariably sung in a high falsetto voice to the accompaniment of a guitar, whose strings were often mended with raw hide. The guitar used to be passed round all the company, and those who could not sing declined the compliment saying, "I am not a musician"³ and usually called for a quart of wine to help the more able throated in their task.

The gaucho and the llanero of the Orinoco were singularly alike. They both were centaurs; both were taciturn, hospitable, kind, bloodthirsty, and vindictive; and both held life (their own and that of others) the cheapest thing in the whole world. Curiously enough for inland peoples, both races were great swimmers and took to water like a duck. The

¹ "Llaneros"—*i.e.*, inhabitants of the llano, the plain. The great plains that stretch to the north of the Orinoco have always been the cradle of a race of hardy and patriotic men. They were the backbone of the armies of Paez and Bolivar in the independence wars.

² It is now a great and flourishing port, with several lines of railway running to it. I remember it a little town remote from civilization and defended by one or two little forts of sun-dried bricks on which several little brass guns were mounted.

³ "No soy musico."

llaneros lived in a far hotter climate, and this perhaps made them more indolent than were their cousins of the south; but speech and customs were very similar, and widely different from those to be observed throughout America.

The following stanza of a song I heard that evening, might have been sung at any estancia in Uruguay or in Bahia Blanca in days gone by:

Por los años de seisenta
Pa' cuidar el ganao
Me dieron pa' mi silla
Un cabayito melao.¹

All the adventures of the llanero and his "honey"-coloured horse were set forth in great detail, just as they would have been in the Argentine Republic, in the same syncopated dialect and to a similar accompaniment.

Fights, cattle robberies, adventures with tigers and with crocodiles carried me back for forty years, with but the difference that in the Argentina they are things of the past, and on the Orinoco are in full vigour and are incidents of daily life.

Not more than a few months before the evening that I passed at Berástegui, a troop of bandits had attacked the little frontier village of Arauca (in Colombian territory), put it to sack and pillage, killed the chief magistrate, cut off his head and then played football with it in the square.

The deliberate opinion of all the cattle-owners at Berástegui was that in the three departments of

¹ "Melao"—literally, "honey-coloured"—is applied to a white horse with yellow skin.

Bolívar, Magdalena, and Atlántico, there was room for six million head of cattle, three million in Bolívar, and at least three in the two adjoining states. Beyond the Andes, the great plains between the Meta and the Orinoco might carry several million head. There are still cattle districts left in Colombia, the state of Antioquia, with its breed of beautiful white cattle with black ears, unique throughout America and not unlike the native, wild, white cattle at Lyme and Chillingham. The Cauca valley at present may contain two hundred thousand head, and so on of the other districts, as Boyacá, Tolima, and the plains on the Patia close to the frontier of Ecuador.

Everyone at Berástegui considered that the immediate future of the country was bound up in cattle-raising. Though, of course, it can never support such immense herds as the Argentine, Brazil, or Venezuela, it is the nearest great stock-raising country by several days to Europe, and, of course, nearer to the United States.

In the old mansion of Berástegui, with its wide-spreading eaves, its groups of trees on every side, and the great plain stretching out to the low hills, there was an air as of an older world. The proprietors, all descended from the early settlers, were educated men and yet born horsemen and accustomed to wild life. Most of them had been through several revolutions ; but all of them saw clearly that their country wanted peace, and none seemed to love fighting for its own sake, after the fashion of the Mexicans.

The small hours found us talking over things and others, of monstrous boa-constrictors, and how

a foolish peon had lassoed a jaguar and been nearly mauled to death, with many other feats by flood and field, told with due emphasis.

It seemed to me that we had only just settled down in our hammocks when a peon came round with the black coffee to say that in another half-hour it would be daylight, and it was time to rise and ride again.

CHAPTER XXI

THE sun was just rising over the forest behind the house, and its reflected light lit up the plain in front, leaving the distant hills floating in a sea of mist, as we mounted our horses to leave Berástegui. Great dew-drops fell off the steeply thatched roof, upon the ground. The horses played with their bits, put their backs up, and danced about in the freshness of the morning air.

Flights of macaws were on the wing towards their feeding-grounds. The cattle were all stringing out, like pictures of big game in Africa, in books by Livingstone and Galton, towards the water-holes.

Upon a sandy place beside a stream one of the peons pointed out a tiger's trail looking exactly like the footprints of a cat enormously enlarged.

Beside the river a capybara¹ scuttled through the reeds and took the water, with his back awash exactly like a hippopotamus in miniature.

As we passed through the high potrero gate into the woods beyond, the hacienda of Berástegui, seen for a moment from the forest path, looked like a woodcut in an old book of travels, then vanished into the book of memories, that the mind keeps, ever half-shut, half-open, according to one's moods.

¹ The carpincho of the Argentine Republic. He is the largest of the rodents, and amphibious. Naturalists call the poor beast *Hydrochaerus capybara*. In Colombia the local name is "ponche."

Almost immediately the freshness of the morning disappeared, and on the forest trail the sand heated up as it were by magic, and yet the smell of the wet leaves and flowers just dried, hung in the air and scented everything. As we struck into the forest path we bade good-bye to the open plains of the Sinú.

These plains, fertilized by the deposit left by the River Sinú in its annual flood, resemble Egypt in their productiveness, though quite unlike it in the richness of their vegetation. In this respect no country of the Old World, except Ceylon, Java, and Singapore, can hold a candle to it. There is something hungry-looking about the richest bush in Africa that differentiates it from the same kind of country in the Americas. It may be something in the soil itself that also causes the extreme difference to be observed in the action of the sun upon the human organism.

Even in Morocco sunstroke is frequent and ten times more so in the Soudan, in India, and throughout the tropics of the Old World. In them, no sane man ventures in the sun without a solar topee; in the Americas a man may wear an ordinary, soft, felt hat in perfect safety. The solar topee is unknown, and the Panama straw hat, which is perhaps the worst defence against the sun imaginable, is used throughout the central and northern parts of South America.

The district towards which the deeply shaded forest path was leading us was quite distinct in character from those of the Sinú.

The path itself ran through a wall of forest and reminded me of the paths I had ridden through long years ago in Paraguay, although the vegetation of

Colombia is even more luxuriant and overwhelming and more menacing in its invading air of strength.

Bird life was scarce, as it is usually in tropic woods ; but in the clearing humming-birds hovered over flowering shrubs and yellow toucans occasionally flew past. Sometimes I think I heard the harsh notes of the tropial, but never once the bell-bird as in Paraguay, where sometimes it sounds its note so like a chapel bell, I have thought that I was near a settlement, when many miles away.

Now and again where trees had fallen a shaft of light lit up the gloom of the dark path, just as an air shaft lets in the light in a long tunnel in a railway.

Occasionally scurrying along at a fast "pace," we met a traveller, who always stopped to hear the news and light a cigarette, as we sat underneath the shade of some thick, spreading tree.

This function of exchanging and transmitting news is an art that everybody understands in countries where the distances between the towns are long, communications difficult, and posts are rare and unreliable.

To the native of such lands the art is inborn and he knows, as it were by instinct, what tinge to give it so as to make it palatable to the receiver's ear. Just as two painters draw a face, intelligent and interesting, or dull and plain, according to the vision of their minds, so does your perfect transmitter of the news tinge it with what he thinks will please you ; and yet the news and painter's model are unchanged. All's in the art that makes them interesting or leaves them duller than they are.

Often these meetings in the forest path took place just at a clearing so that the riders were illumined as by a halo, whilst we remained in shade. We used to pass the time of day, exchange a cigarette, unpack our news, and separate upon our several ways, like ships at sea that speak each other and sail on.

On the wide, open prairie, and the steep mountain trail, in the dark forest paths, such as that from Berástegui, and countless others in Mexico, Brazil, and Paraguay, I have crossed travellers and hope that I live in their memories, as they still live in mine, with all their turns of gesture and of speech, their horses' colours and their brands as deeply burned into my brain as they were burned upon their hips, and the last flutter of their ponchos as they turned to go still in the corner of my eye.

Let them all go with God, wherever they were going to.

They cannot take themselves out of my memory, and in some limbo or another, some place where horses never tire, nor riders stiffen, where camping-grounds are always well supplied with water and with grass, perhaps we all may meet again and ride.

Even dark forest paths must have an ending, and this one came out at a little settlement called La Cienaga de Oro—that is, the Golden Marsh.

Lost in the woods and quite unchanged, I should suppose, since its foundation by some unknown conqueror, the little hamlet lay with its little church standing out like a lighthouse over the sea of green.

A nephew of the owners of Berástegui, a student of something or another in Cartagena, upon his long

vacation, accompanied us, riding a pacing mule. He was supposed to know the road ; but had we followed his advice we might have found ourselves lost in the forest at least a dozen times, for he branched off on any little trail that crossed the path, announcing that by following it we should save several miles. As upon leaving the hacienda the sun was on the near side of the horses, and we knew that the road ran east and west, once was enough, and we refused to follow him after his first essay had landed us in front of a great pool carpeted over with the *Victoria Regia* and quite unfordable.

When after several plunges up to our girths we had got back to the highroad, we quite dispensed with him as guide, although we kept him as a philosopher and friend.

He also had a pistol without cartridges, just as in days gone by in England, when all wore swords, men of his stamp had their swords rusted in the sheath and quite undrawable from disuse. Still, in each case the unlethal weapon proclaimed their status as a gentleman. Though quite unarmed, he yet was furnished against the usual ills that may beset Colombian humanity. His tube of aspirin was ever ready ; his vial of "Curarina," sovereign for snake-bites, peeped from the habit of his coat.

Few go abroad in the coast lands of the republic without this much approved specific, sold at one dollar in all pharmacies. Its fame has not been dimmed by the disconcerting circumstance that its inventor, after having realized a handsome competence by its sale, chanced to be bitten by a snake. The poor man

swallowed a whole bottle of his stuff immediately, and died within the hour. Some were so cruel as to say the snake that bit him was of a harmless species and that he died of his own medicine.

Colombia is a land of snakes, and yet one thinks but little of them, in the same way that death occupies little of one's thoughts, though ever imminent. To be bitten in the wilds is generally to die, though now and then the actual cautery and whisky in large quantities may chance to make a cure. When in spite of our blind guide we reached La Cienega de Oro, it turned out that he had a harmless and perhaps unnecessary wife domiciled in the place. She and her family received us hospitably. On the veranda of the house the children were playing with a tiger cub about the size of a large cat. It appeared desperately savage and snarled at anyone it did not know, though with the children it was tame enough. The people of the place had taken it alive and killed its mother. They said when it was six months old it would be far too dangerous to keep. Unlike the puma, that often makes a perfectly safe pet and is known in some of the republics as "the friend of man,"—the jaguar is quite untamable. Whilst the horses fed, we went down to what the people called an oil spring, and skimmed off about a pint of raw petroleum from the surface of the spring with a large kitchen spoon. It must have risen from some source or other farther up the stream, which no doubt some day will be found and the oil bored for scientifically.

The country round the Cienega de Oro is open, with occasional low hills, and much more like the

pampas of the Argentine Republic in its character, than are the banks of the Sinú. Towns dot it here and there, and all of them are curiously different from each other. This is due partly to their extremely different positions, and partly to the lack of communications and of roads. This has imprinted special features upon all of them. Thus Sincelejo is a city set upon a hill, and stands nearly six hundred feet above the sea. Its population may be about ten thousand, more or less, for naturally there are no figures to rely upon. The streets are hilly, with now and then a boulder cropping up in them, and appear at one time to have been cattle tracks, upon whose edges houses have been built irregularly. Still, there are one or two short arcaded streets after the pattern of a town in the Castiles. An enormous and barn-like church dominates the place. The bells ring constantly, and, as throughout Colombia the people are religious, or at the least observant, on Sundays and upon saints' days it is crowded to the door.

Syrians as usual keep the stores, and chaffer in their guttural Spanish even more determinedly than the Colombians themselves. The stores contain all the unconsidered trifles necessary in little towns in South America—things that few people could possibly require and even so on credit. But, besides these, they are marvellously well supplied with electric torches, celluloid spectacles that look like tortoiseshell, kodaks, and in general all those products of modern life that naturally appeal so much to people who, living in a world that has stood still for centuries, grasp at all newness with avidity. There

are no drinking-bars, such as are to be found in nearly every town in Argentina; no cinemas; no hooligans; no poor; few rich; and, in general, life rolls along pleasantly enough.

The hotel was a sort of cross between a Spanish venta and a Mexican meson, both of which institutions owe their genesis to the Oriental caravanserai. Perhaps the Colombian establishment was superior in comfort to either of them. In the meson there is a vault-like, spotlessly clean room with a plaster step in it, on which you lay your saddle-gear to form a bed. The key is solemnly delivered to you, as in the East, and may be six or more inches long. No food is to be procured. You have to go out on the plaza, and, seated at a table, eat stews cooked with red pepper, and the tortillas that take the place of bread. Your horses drink at a trough, and someone almost certainly is there to sell you corn and the chopped straw they eat. In the Spanish venta the only difference to be found is that the room is dirty and the key a foot in length. In the Spanish hostelry you ride in through the kitchen and leave your horse tied in a dark and filthy stable and take your meals in a room above it, so that in the frequent pauses in your meal you hear the animals stamping at flies and munching at their corn.

In Sincelejo you have to take your horses out to grass and swelter in the sun, watching them graze tormented by the flies, water and bathe them, and then buy corn for them, and stand by whilst they feed to stop the grain from being stolen.

Meals in the hotel were served under a trellis-

work, shaded with creepers, and were both plentiful and good.

The company was varied and pleasant in the main. An Antioquian shopkeeper on his way to the coast was an active, pushing, and a business man down to his finger-tips, like all his countrymen. Tall, clean, intelligent, and absolutely white, these people form a sort of caste apart, and differ totally from all their countrymen. Some say they are descendants of the Jews of Spain, and others say they are Moriscos who escaped and coming to the Indies changed their faith, but not their nature, for the Moriscos were born traders and good business men. This may be so, but it would seem more probable that they came from the Biscay provinces, for they resemble the Biscayans in character and type.

All over the republic you are sure to meet them, and in their province no Syrian is to be found, just as no Jews are said to thrive in Aberdeen, the natives of both countries being as keen in money matters as the best Israelite. The Antioquians no doubt are the backbone of the republic of Colombia, and, as is frequently the case with peoples of the kind, are quite well satisfied both with themselves and the position that they occupy. This is the case with the Catalonians in Spain. Some people have observed it of the Scottish race, although I have good reasons to suppose, this is a calumny.

Two of the wandering Chinese pedlars who are to be found in most of the coast towns throughout Colombia appeared during the dinner and talked in pidgin-Spanish, entering into the conversation,

although not sitting down to table ; but, in Colombia, as in old-fashioned towns in Spain, the servants all talk during the meals upon an equal footing with the guests. We did not purchase any of their goods, but that did not impair their imperturbable good humour, and they continued talking pleasantly, occasionally bringing out silks and little boxes that they put back again, when no one bought them, with an air of being pleased.

The Antioquian, a man of observation and a humorist, told us that once, in a small ranche town in the plains of Venezuela, called San Fernando de Apure, he had been present during the feast of Corpus Christi and watched the usual procession of the saints that in such places are carried through the streets. This ceremony, known familiarly as "taking out the blocks,"¹ always creates enthusiasm and collects a crowd. By his side a Chinaman was standing, and the Antioquian said to him, "What kind of gods have you in China? Do they look like these?" The Chinaman took a long look at the procession, thought for a little, and rejoined, "Ours are far better ; they are made of bronze."

A philosophical answer, if you look at it in an impartial spirit, for certainly a brazen god is far more durable than one hewn out of wood.

An officer or two, a wandering student, and an Italian santero—that is, a saint-seller—comprised our company, and though the story of the Chinese gods was rather personal to one who dealt in plaster figures of the saints, he laughed as heartily as any of us, and

¹ "Sacar los bultos."

did not seem annoyed, remarking with a smile, "Bronze gods would last too long to be good business; mine break easily, and that is good for trade."

Quite a philosopher was the saint-seller, although perhaps his table manners lacked subtlety, and his economies, although sound enough, were brutally expressed.

The two Colombian officers, slight, elegant, and looking rather like flies in a milk-pot, with their dark faces and their white uniforms, regarded the Italian as curiously as if he had been some sort of strange marsupial animal, for they were educated men and liberals, opposed to priestcraft and its works, and yet perhaps, after the fashion of some anticlerical Spanish Americans, may have gone out and bought a little plaster image from the wandering saint-seller, as it were, on the sly.

A curious little town is Sincelejo, a sort of rallying-place and centre for the trade of the surrounding country, with an individuality of its own, for in it the Old World still lingers, and yet much trade is done and business carried on with the United States.

Nothing could well be more unlike Sincelejo than is Corozál,¹ the town from which the celebrated cattle plains, known as Los Llanos de Corozál, are named.

The road between Sincelejo and Corozál is infamous for unshod horses in the dry season, for here and there great tracks of gravel, extending to a mile, cover its surface and soon make horses' feet too tender for the road. Sometimes the track winds into the

¹ The corozo is a species of palm-tree. Corozál is a grove of corozos. This palm bears an oily nut.

primeval woods, following a watercourse that when we travelled it was dry. How in the season of the rains people can use it as a road is a mystery, for the dry stream is bounded by high banks. Sheets of flat rock surround the town, reminding one of the approaches to towns that I have seen in the Atlas Mountains, or in Lower Aragon. It was just getting dark as we stumbled and slithered on the rocks, and the town was desolate and dark.

It boasted an hotel of quite a different kind from that in Sincelejo, and may have been the house of some old-fashioned family of local magnates and had seen better days.

It reminded me of a posada in the outlying districts of Castile, for there was no one to receive us, not even dogs to bay, as we rode up to the front door.

So desolate it seemed, I thought it was deserted, and feared we should have to call upon the priest and ask for a night's lodging or try if any Syrian store-keeper would take compassion on our plight. But before doing so we rode through the front door into an inner courtyard, where in the increasing darkness I discerned a man sitting in an old Spanish chair, tilted against the wall.

He welcomed us, if the word applies to such a perfunctory act, into the gaunt, dark house. It soon appeared that there was plenty of everything, that we had brought ourselves. Except a venta in Castile, or, to be more accurate, in some old Spanish book of travels, perhaps no such hotel exists as the drear hostelry of Corozál.

Civility was the one sauce to every dish, and, to be candid, with it, even hunger is more bearable. We sallied out and bought provisions and some candles, whilst supper was in preparation, and we were wise in doing so. Sardines and cheese with Spanish raisins are a fit feast for hungry kings; moreover, they are standard eatables in every one of the republics in South America. It may be that in monarchies they would seem exiguous; but in a democratic state, and after a hard ride, they are as filling as was the black broth and the cheese of Sparta to its citizens.

As we were in the position of the devil—that is, our time in Corozál was short; for few would choose to make a long stay in the curious, old, rocky-streeted town, unless he were a Daniel Vierge looking for landscapes and for settings for a life of Don Quixote—we lighted the whole packet of old-fashioned candles and surveyed the room that fate had brought us into. The light revealed an enormous, vaulted chamber that seemed to have been part of some ancient Spanish mansion, built in the early years of the first conquest. A ruined chandelier covered with yellow gauze and fly-blown, till it looked like a lady's spotted veil, hung in the middle of the room.

Two chairs; two beds, with their accompanying mosquito curtains hung from a bar capped with a tarnished crown in ormolu; a little table; and a tin washing-stand with an earthen pitcher in it, comprised the furniture. Upon the walls was hung a coloured print of Gower Street Station, in the unreformed, underground railway, showing a train disappearing into an Avernus in wreaths of volleying smoke. In

the chief place of honour, but all askew, was a print of Simon Bolivar, El Libertador himself, directing the entire Colombian forces at the crowning victory of Boyacá.

A cheap and German picture of a saint—St. Anthony of Padua, if my memory serves me—hung facing the Liberator. These were the decorations of the apartment, unless about a dozen bats, that circled round about our heads, might count as ornaments.

Supper was rather a fragmentary meal, for the boiled rice and leathery beef-stew, that after a long wait made its appearance, was not inviting. The bats swooped down at intervals like harpies, and the mosquitos sounded their shrill horn. Centipedes crawled on the walls, threatening to fall on to the plates. We ate some of the stew unwillingly, not to offend the host, and luckily two or three dogs came in and helped us in our task.

The night was interesting, for a fierce storm arose. The lightning now and then lit up the gaunt apartment, making effects upon the walls and on the roof as in a theatre. These sort of nights are worth a whole long day of riding in the sun—that is, to recollect them with all the little irritations softened by time and distance, and the effect left clear upon the mind.

Throughout the province there are several little towns upon the central plateau much like Corozál: one called Oveja almost as curious. The road to it from Corozál is five-and-twenty miles, hilly and broken and quite uninhabited.

When we arrived there it was raining, and the thermometer may have stood about ninety-six, or,

perhaps, a hundred degrees. Our host, an ancient, revolutionary colonel, now turned a storekeeper, regretted bitterly that he had not a bottle of old rum to offer us, for he knew well (he said) that Englishmen looked on it as a first necessity of life—at least, some mining engineers who had passed by the town a month ago had drunk two bottles of it.

Twenty-five miles or so of hill and dale, and now and then of stretches of thick forest, lie between Oveja and El Carmen, a town that lies on a flat plain, surrounded by plantations of tobacco, that at the time I visited the place were quite neglected, for all their produce used to go to Hamburg, there to be dressed and worked into cigars that were exported to America with a Habana label on the box. El Carmen and the town of Monteria are the two hottest places in the department. The sun pours down on both of them like boiling metal from a blast furnace, yet they are healthy, and Monteria especially so, in spite of the great heat.

These inland towns and others—such as San Juan Nepomuceno, stuck upon a hill, San Cayetano, on the edge of a primeval forest, and Sahagun, right in the midst of a wide plain, the last well built and with wide streets and a fine church dating from Spanish times—are amongst the most remote and curious little places that I have seen in South America, except in Paraguay.

Till yesterday but little breath from the outside world has penetrated to them, and they have slumbered on. Perhaps to say that they have slumbered is unfair, for what is progress, after all, except as it

affects the mind and the intelligence? Although material progress has been scant enough for the last fifty years, culture and education seem to me upon a higher level in this group of little towns than in the country towns of Mexico and of the Argentine Republic.

Naturally everyone makes verses, for that is quite endemic in Colombia; but in addition those who can afford them buy books and newspapers, and many followed all the phases of the war in Europe quite as intelligently as in most European towns.

I left them with regret, and after wandering about from one town to another, now riding through dense forests, and again leading our horses up and down the hills, then passing open plains, sun-swept and quite deserted, as the cattle had been driven to the swamps, we set our faces towards the Magdalena River upon the homeward trail.

CHAPTER XXII

THE westward trail left Sahagun, a curious little place in which the trees impinge upon the houses, and the houses run into the woods irregularly.

Still, a place that insists and stamps itself upon the memory, on account of its gigantic plaza, resembling that of Cerete on the Sinú, and its two or three wide streets that appear uninhabited but yet give you the impression that eyes are watching you as you ride past, and make you straighten yourself up and feel your horse's mouth, so that he makes the best appearance to the invisible, but subtly felt critic, possibly peeping through the blinds. Just outside Sahagun, before the road enters upon an open plain, in a little clearing in the wood, there is a cemetery, one of those desolate Colombian cemeteries that are amongst the most forlorn of any of their kind. Sometimes a wall of sun-dried bricks surrounds them, sometimes a rusty, barbed-wire fence.

In any case there is a gateway built of adobe, painted originally white or a pale lemon colour, but bleached by sun and rain into an indistinguishable smear. The gate is almost off the hinges and is blistered by the sun. The crosses usually are of iron and almost always stand askew. Wild animals make

little paths amongst the graves, and now and then an armadillo has his lair in one of them. All is so sun-dried and so neglected-looking, that as you pass the gate, you involuntarily compassionate those who lie in the sandy sepulchres, exposed in death, as they have been in life, to a continual battle with the sun.

No flowers are ever placed upon the graves, or, if they are, they are so soon burned up it is the same as if they never had been put there, and the dead seem more forgotten and alone than they could be in any other cemetery in the world. Better by far than this is an unfenced Moorish graveyard with its rough stones buried in lentiscus-bushes cut by a hundred paths, for everyone rides through them. There at the least the dead may hear the footfalls of the passing horses or the mules—sounds that have been familiar in their lives.

As you pass by a graveyard such as that of Sahagun, it would be vain to drop a tear, for it would evaporate before it reached the ground. You can but look at it and hope that those who lie beneath the sand are not disturbed by the harsh cry of the macaws.

The trail runs out into the open plains, but plains dotted with islands and cut by peninsulas of wood. At last these disappear and leave a steppe, all full of anthills, and, at the season of the year we crossed it, as brown and bare as is the Sahara below Morocco at the Sahiat-el-Hamara.

In the great droughts the people burn the woods to open up new pasture-lands, and as we rode, on the horizon we saw the virgin forest all aflame, a miserable

sight, and comparable to the action of a man who lies in wait for someone, kills him, and throws his money down a well.

In a cattle-breeding country it may be necessary to clear fresh pastures, but to burn trees hundreds of years of age is a sin against nature and should be dealt with by the law. A light breeze blew the ashes of the burning forest towards us. They fell upon our hair and clung upon the horses' coats. It made one wish to rend one's clothes, to think of the destruction of so much beauty in such a wanton way. Labour is scarce and nature more exuberant than can be imagined in the north, and it may be the ashes fertilize the soil, but I was glad at least we had the ashes on our heads; it seemed that someone mourned.

In the fierce noonday sun, before we halted under a ceiba-tree,¹ the trail ran through a strip of virgin forest that was all on fire. The path was narrow and at times led close beside great trees aflame, burning their funeral pyre.

The dry lianas all were flaming, the heat intense, the ashes suffocating. Now and then in the forest a great tree toppled down with a crash, and a thick cloud of smoke went up into the sky. The horses snorted, now jumping over a charred log, and now edging away from one of the tall, fiery trees in terror. Over our heads the sun shone down like brass and met the heat that rose up from the burning wood. All was as silent as the grave, except for the quiet murmuring of the fire, for all the birds and the animals had fled, and so we rode along, stifling and

¹ *Bombax ceiba.*

coughing, winding about a veritable purgatory of nature, made by man, who in his folly, has made for nature and himself so many purgatories.

All the wide, open country between Sahagun and the River Magdalena, and as far as the Cienega de Ayapél upon the banks of the San Jorge River, is where the Spaniards at the conquest found the richest of the Indian graves. No trace of them exists to-day, for the first conquerors did their work so thoroughly that there is no tradition of any Indian burial-place having been found again.

The plains were desolate, for all the cattle had been moved into the swamps along the banks of the San Jorge and the Magdalena. Houses are few and far between, as is the case in every pastoral country, and as the tracks left by the cattle on their way down to the water-holes intersect the road, itself a trail made by the feet of passing horses and of mules, nothing is easier than to go astray and follow a wrong path.

Just as night fell we called at a small ranche under some sandhills near a little stream. The owner, getting barebacked on his horse, showed us the way across the stream. Then, after taking half a dollar, he gave directions that he said were quite infallible. "Follow the trail, which as you see is clear." It was scarcely visible in the bright moonlight that destroys all perspective, and all sense of values. "Be sure to keep the wind on the left side of you, and keep on westerly by south. When you get through the medanos¹—they run about a quarter of a league—you pass a dead tree on the right. Leave it upon the right and still

¹ Medanos = sandhills.

ride westerly by south. Do not forget the wind, always on the left side. Your horses seem a little tired, don't kick them over much or they may tire entirely. That would be awkward, for San Benito is about four hours on. There are no houses on the way except a ranche. It is deserted. Look out for the tigers. Adios, go with God."

He turned his horse and vanished down a sandhill, leaving us amazed. No wayfarer, even although a fool, could err with such directions, and so we stumbled on. Long did we wander in the sandhills, that in the moonlight looked like the Umbrian Hills in miniature, riding down slopes and scrambling up others, that in the false light of the moon appeared most terrible, though perhaps in the light of day they would have been nothing but mere molehills.

When we emerged again upon the plains our guide confessed that he was lost.

Though a bad guide, he was a man accustomed to the wilds, and lying down upon the ground he listened carefully for the sound of a passing traveller or for the barking of a dog. Then he remembered that a road ran from Corozál to Magangué, and, looking at the stars, said he believed we were not far from it.

Riding in ever-widening circles, round a man with a box of matches who now and then struck one of them to show us where he was, we hit the road at a point nearly half a mile away.

Then, fixing on a star, we rode towards it, keeping the wind on our left side and going to the west.

No house appeared or the least trace of any town.

The moonlight cast long shadows on the ground, making the horses look like camels and every stone a boulder, turning the bushes into the shapes of strange, fantastic animals. The horses, that had been fourteen or fifteen hours upon the road, had sweated and had dried so often that all their coats were white as if they had been sprinkled with salt brine. They stumbled on the stones, and when at last we came to a deserted hut under a clump of sheltering bongo-trees we put up for the night. There was no water and no food, and all the grass was dry and wiry; but a hungry horse will attack any kind of pasture, and they set at it with a will. Throwing our saddles down beneath a tree, and spreading a mosquito net above us, we slept the sleep of the just—or of the unjust, for both are equal before sleep.

Next morning, parched with thirst and hungry, we started out upon the road, the horses stiff and leg-weary. In two hours and a half we reached the town of San Benito, and, riding up to the house of the Alcalde, asked for hospitality.

As it fell out, that morning he had sallied forth to catch a thief, who had ensconced himself, armed with a large knife, in a deserted house. We were not in the best condition for what in the wild portions of Colombia is known as a “molestia”—that is, a “trouble”—but thought it best to assist our prospective host, with a view of benefits to come. Slowly and most unwillingly we rode up to the house where the thief had taken refuge and listened to the magistrate summon the miscreant to yield, telling him that the two Americans outside were both armed to

the teeth and would assist him to the death. Either his resolution failed him, or the terrors of our name unnerved his arm, for when the Alcalde boldly went inside the house, which he did at the peril of his life, after a scuffle he emerged holding the man by an arm bent behind his back.

Thus was law vindicated. Peace reigned once more in the town of San Benito, and we sat down to a good breakfast, whilst our horses munched their corn.

The town of San Benito was as much buried in luxuriant vegetation as one of the Jesuit "capillas"¹ in Paraguay. The reed-thatched houses were absolutely covered to the eaves with every kind of red and yellow creeper. Ropes of lianas, all in flower, festooned the trees, and in the open spaces a white and purple striped convolvulus carpeted the sand.

The prisoner by this time had come to reason and sat sullenly with his hands tied behind his back in what the Alcalde termed the "house of malefactors." It was a little hut, from which a child might easily have escaped by pulling down the wall.

However, as we know, fear guards the vineyard more than does the fence.²

After due compliments and thanks, we took our way upon a path that led through swamps on which grazed herds of cattle, fat and sleek, in spite of the great drought.

These swamps are never dry, and in them are

¹ Capillas=chapel; but in Paraguay it is often used to designate whole villages.

² "Miedo guarda viñas, no vallado."

countless alligators and great flocks of wading and aquatic birds.

Sometimes the road ran on a narrow causeway between deep swamps where alligators basked in the sun. As we rode by they swam off sluggishly. At other times the trail passed shallower swamps on which fed cattle, standing up to their hocks in water and in mud.

White ibises sat on the cattle's backs, swaying to keep their balance, as a sailor sways upon a deck. Others stood at the water's edge so motionless and sacramental-looking, that one saw at a glance why the Egyptians worshipped them.

Again, the track twisted out into small, open spaces, three or four hundred yards in breadth.

A mile or two away the woods upon the banks of the San Jorge River stood up like a wall, blocking the view towards the south. To the west the swamps of Ayapél, at that season of the year packed with the cattle moved from the drought-swept plains, stretched up towards the boundaries of Antioquia.

Now and then herds of horses were intermingled with the cattle, giving a look of what the plains of Africa must have been, with herds of quaggas and of gnus, before the advent of the cockney and his battery of guns.

All of a sudden we came out on the San Jorge, a broad and yellow stream, three or four hundred yards in breadth. The bank on which we stood was high and sun-swept. On it were perched some miserable huts, and underneath them ten or twelve canoes, all tied to poles driven into the stream, rose and fell, lazily.

Upon the other side was a small town buried in woods, that seemed to block it off from all the world.

Piling our saddles into a long, crank dugout, and standing up performing miracles of equilibrium, as it appeared to us, though any child upon the river's banks can walk in a canoe as well as on dry land, we crossed the river, and, struggling up a staircase cut in the hard mud, entered the town of Jéguá, once a thriving place, but fallen into decay. We passed the siesta in the public hall, used also as the school-house, a dusky edifice, whose walls were decorated with German kindergarten plates, but with the text in Spanish, explaining all the parts and particles of the rhinoceros, the camelopard, and the elephant, "for the Colombian youth."¹

Long did we slumber, quite undisturbed by the mosquitos that buzzed in myriads in the deserted room. Then, sallying out to buy provisions and to find some means of transport down to Magangué, the port upon the Magdalena where the river steamers call, we found ourselves in difficulties.

The one steam-launch that Jéguá boasted was away upon a trip to Ayapél and not available. Upon the bank that we had quitted in the morning there was no trail, unless we had returned to strike the road from Corozál, forty or fifty miles away.

Canoes were plentiful and paddlers easy to be found, as all the population was, as it were, amphibious and born to the canoe.

One Anastasio Girón, described as a "good, faithful Indian, one who will not get drunk until he

¹ "Para la juventud Colombiana."

reaches Magangué," was recommended to us by a man in uniform, who may have been some sort of an official in a not improbable customs-house.

The good and faithful Anastasio was asleep beneath the palm-thatched roof of his canoe, his head in shade, his naked feet stuck well out in the sun. Since my youth in Argentina I have always been a little shy of breaking the slumbers of a male¹ white Christian. However, Anastasio, though a Christian, as a scapulary showed hung round his walnut-coloured neck, was certainly not white.

This fact removed all hesitation on my part. When he was well awake, and after swallowing some rum from a small calabash that he produced, and after salutations which were not short, we fell a-chaffering. It seemed that the canoe, in Anastasio's phrase, "gained two dollars gold a day." This seemed excessive, and for "gold" I substituted "silver," exactly half the price. This must have been far above the usual tariff, for the owner jumped at it, only requiring half to be paid at once. I feared the calabash would be refilled, but turning round he gave the money to an Indian woman who he said was his wife. How she appeared upon the scene I never knew or ever shall know, but perhaps, whilst we were bargaining, she had glided up, her shoeless feet making no sound upon the sand.

Our saddles and our bags filled at least half of the thatched awning in the middle of the canoe, leaving us barely room to shelter from the sun. A Syrian who kept a little store sold us some sardines, some

¹ Un Cristiano Macho.

biscuits, and half a dozen bottles of light beer and half a dozen more of kola, with a bundle of cigars. Thus being furnished for the voyage, we waited till the sun was low, and Anastasio and his mate, a lathy, Indian youth, who he professed was "born to paddle, just as a mule is born to carry packs," we pushed into the stream. No single soul stood on the bank to witness our departure, yet I am certain that every mortal in the little town was watching it, and in years to come will talk about myself and of my secretary, describe our clothes and saddles, and will say, I hope, that for Americanos we were almost Christians. A few strokes of the paddle took us round the bend and out of sight of Jéguia, which disappeared into the overwhelming woods, as if it had never existed, or had been blotted out.

The evening breeze blew pleasantly as we sat on the top of the straw shelter in the middle of the canoe, eating the provisions that we had laid in at Jéguia, and the voyage promised well. The paddlers seemed untirable, just as a fresh horse seems untirable when he begins his course.

Soon the breeze fell, the moon shone out and lit the river, turning it from the turbid yellow that it was in sunlight into a sheet of silver, that mirrored the tall trees whose shadows seemed to penetrate into vast depths of water and of shade. The fireflies played about the bushes, and now and then a night bird flew above our heads, uttering a hoarse cry. For several miles we floated gently down the stream, the paddlers by degrees becoming listless, even the youth who "was born to paddle" taking a perfunctory

stroke at intervals. At last sleep overtook them, and they lay their paddles in-board and fell asleep, sitting upon the floor of the canoe. We must have also slept, for we were roused in an hour or two by the canoe sticking its nose into the bank. This roused the paddlers, who feared the current would upset the dugout. Their voices roused us to find that we had come out in a clearing in the woods of several miles in length. We landed to stretch our legs and reconnoitre, and found ten or a dozen horses feeding peacefully.

One of them was so tame that I walked up to pat him, but he became uneasy, snorted, and moved away. I see him now, and always shall, a roan with three white feet and a white nose, and could, if necessary, draw his brand from memory. Cattle fed farther off, but to approach them for a man on foot would have been dangerous, especially at night. The canoe had grounded not far from where the forest bounded the clearing, and in the moonlight the trees formed a continuous wall so black and solid-looking that it seemed made of masonry. We re-embarked, refreshed, drank the last bottles of the kola, and for an hour sat smoking, lulled by the current lapping up against the side of the canoe and by the plashing of the paddles as they dipped regularly.

We slipped down once again between dark woods without a trace of human habitation. Once a large animal crossed swimming, not far in front of us. It may have been a tapir or a capybara, but when it saw us it swam instinctively into the shadow of the trees, leaving a gentle ripple as it passed. The Southern

Cross hung in the sky above our heads, Sirius gleamed redly, and all the stars seemed to shoot beams of softest light into the water in the still tropic night.

Occasionally, but rarely, sounds of wild animals came from the recesses of the everglades. It seemed that we, afloat in our canoe, were the sole inhabitants of an unpeopled world, alone with destiny. Once more sleep overcame us, but still we drifted on. Two or three times I woke and looked out on the interminable woods. The boatmen both were sleeping bowed over their paddles, and once when I looked up, my secretary was paddling, seated beside the slumbering Indian.

The night wore on, and so we passed it, sleeping, and waking fitfully, now paddling for a space, now drifting noiselessly. At last I woke, dripping with dew and stiff, to find the world all buried in white mist. We were afloat upon a ghostly river. The trees appeared gigantic, seen through the steaming cauldron. The Southern Cross had set, and the chill in the air showed that the day was just about to break.

Little by little a faint glow of red appeared, and the mist slowly disappeared. As the sun rose, in the fresh air of the new day, we found ourselves drifting between two sandbanks, with shallows stretching out between them, peopled by myriads of cormorants. They seemed asleep, for as we noiselessly were wafted past, none of them stirred from where it stood. Almost immediately the sun's rays shone upon the stream, and then a miracle occurred—one of those miracles that Nature sometimes exhibits for the benefit of those who seek her out, or chance to stray, as we had done, to her remotest haunts.

Myriads and myriads of fish leaped up into the air. The water boiled with them, and the sun shone upon their silvery sides. Fish, three or four feet long, shot up into the air and fell into the water with a resounding crash. Fish, of the size of herrings, shot up gracefully, their bodies bent in a half circle, and disappeared again so quickly that we rubbed our eyes, to make sure that they had really leaped and disappeared.

Millions of fish, the size of minnows, put their heads up into the air, and made a tiny caper as if they too wished to salute the sun. The water boiled; showers of spray darted up and fell upon the floor of the canoe. It seemed a universal act of adoration of the sun by all the fish, past, present, and to come, that ever swam in the San Jorge River, since the first conquest of the land or the beginning of the world.

The miracle, for I maintain it surely was one—that is, if miracles in their real essence are but the triumph of the forces that Nature holds deep buried in her womb—lasted but a few minutes, and then the fish, as if tired of the upper air, or as if their duty was discharged, all disappeared into their natural element.

It left us wondering. Even the stolid Indian boatmen were astonished, and one said, “Jesus, what a world of fish!”

Then they bent to their paddles sturdily, whilst we sat underneath the “toldo”¹ sheltering from the sun.

In a few hours we passed the mouth of the great

¹ Awning or tent.

Cauca River, then ran into the Magdalena, more than a mile in breadth.

Great barges, known as bongos, crept along the banks, propelled by crews of Indian punters, and rafts a hundred feet in length swept down the current, with whole families camped upon the logs.

Long, arrow-like canoes shot out occasionally with a man standing in the stern, like a Venetian gondolier.

Great herds of cattle fed upon the banks, and now and then a swart vaquero, swinging his lazo, rounded them up, galloping furiously. On every sandbank there were basking alligators, log-like but watchful, whose little eyes, sunk in their scaly foreheads, seemed immovable. The forest upon both banks of the river towered high above us, making us feel as small in our canoe as ants afloat upon a water-lily leaf, feeble and impotent to cope with the gigantic vegetation that seemed antagonistic to mankind.

The fierce sun blazed upon the water, which reflected it upon our faces as through a magnifying glass, and still we paddled on.

Then, passing round an elbow of the stream meeting the influx of a creek, that raised a little seaway, in which we tossed about in the canoe like a log tosses in the surf upon a beach, we came upon the town as if by accident. Built upon piles and looking like a Dyak village in the Straits of Singapore, the town of Magangué lay sweltering, half buried in the haze. We had come into our port. Canoes and horses; old-world towns; the infinite, wide plains; the forests all bedecked with orchids and lianas; the heat, the

morning chill, and the discomforts of the road, with all that these things mean to a traveller, when at home he muses by the fire, had become memories.

Next day saw us aboard a high-decked, stern-wheel steamer, on our passage to the coast.

